

**METRO
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Detroit Free Press

WEDNESDAY
Jan. 22,
2003
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DAMAGED LIVES | LEAD'S TOXIC TOLL

President's patience with Iraq wears thin

By RON HUTCHESON
AND WARREN P. STROBEL
FREE PRESS WASHINGTON STAFF

WASHINGTON — Despite a lack of support from most other world powers, President George W. Bush said Tuesday that time is running out for Iraq to cooperate.

And, as U.S. and British forces are being deployed to the Persian Gulf region, a top U.S. diplomat said that alternatives to war were nearly exhausted.

"It's clear to me now that he is not disarming," Bush said, referring to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "This business about more time — how much more time do we need to see that he's not disarming?"

"This looks like a rerun of a bad movie, and I'm not interested in watching it."

Please see DISARM, Page 3A

► Protesters head to Iraq; other notes. 3A

Ford losses narrowed by cost cutting

By JEFFREY McCracken
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Ford Motor Co., one year into its massive turnaround plan, continues to struggle to make money, especially at its core business: making cars and trucks.

Ford, however, succeeded in the fourth quarter of 2002 in substantially slowing the red ink as cost cutting across North America began to take hold.

Ford was also helped by 15-percent better earnings at Ford Credit and the popularity of more profitable sport-utility vehicles like the Ford Explorer and Expedition, whose sales grew by 25 percent and 31 percent, respectively, in December.

Nonetheless, Ford lost money the last three months of the year and for all of 2002.

Please see FORD, Page 2A

► Judge fines Ford in van rollover suit. 1D

Investor may pump in cash to help Kmart

By JENNIFER DIXON
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

One of the country's savviest investors is prepared to pour millions of dollars in cash into Kmart and pull the discounter out of the largest retail bankruptcy in history, according to people familiar with the situation.

Edward Lampert, worth an estimated \$800 million, has a reputation on Wall Street for his lucrative deal-making, but may be better known for his recent kidnapping. He was duct-taped and held for 30 hours in the bathtub of a Days Inn in Connecticut.

A person familiar with the bankruptcy

Please see KSMART, Page 5A

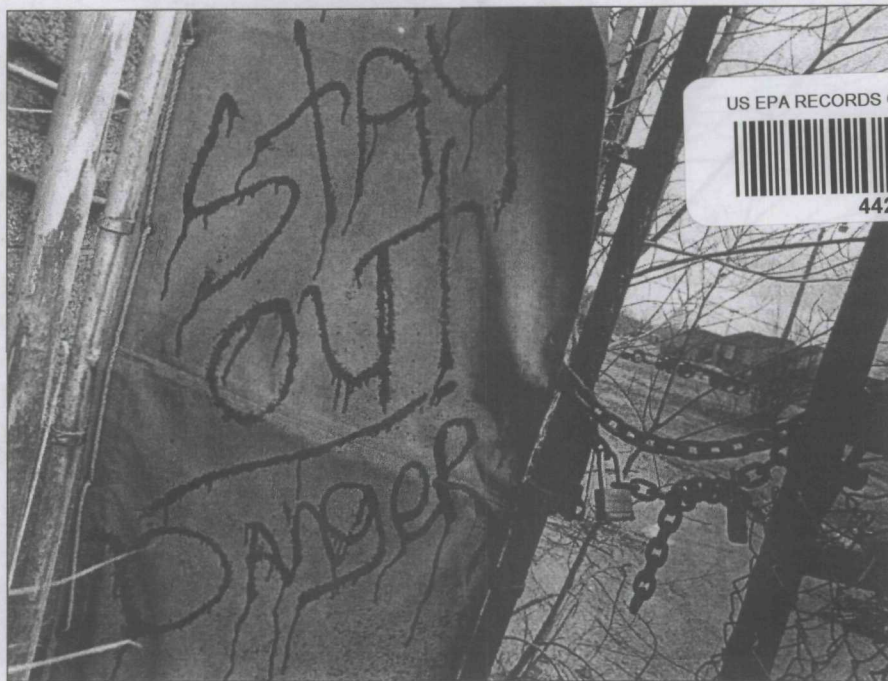
► Lampert succeeded through smarts. 5A

ON DIVIDED GROUND

A couple's struggle to "heal Israel" after the terrorist killing of their son. First in a series of columns from a troubled land.

RON DZWONKOWSKI, 10A

Families in danger from smelter fallout



US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5



442683

FOREBODING WORDS: A handwritten sign warns of the hazards at the abandoned Master Metals site, 4700 E. Nevada in Detroit. Nonetheless, gaps in the surrounding fence make the site accessible to children and vagrants. Nearly 20 years after the smelter closed, the neighborhood has never been cleaned up.

CHILDREN FIRST SPECIAL REPORT

TODAY

- Soil samples pinpoint smelter site pollution. 6A
- How to make your voice heard on the smelter. 6A
- The smelter's history. 6A
- Other states do more for cleanups by smelters. 8A

- After Free Press series debuts, Detroit official pledges stronger effort on lead poisoning. 9A
- The problem and its prevention. 9A

FRIDAY



Children still suffer learning disabilities from lead paint poisoning despite education campaigns. Avery Kukla's mother says he's one of them.

THURSDAY



Because of a focus on lead paint, widespread lead contamination in soil is often ignored. Tests by the Free Press reveal metro Detroit hot spots.

SATURDAY



What experts say it will take to significantly reduce childhood lead poisoning locally, statewide and nationally.

To read previous installments, go to
www.freep.com/lead

TUESDAY: Amid questions of financial mismanagement, Michigan's lead-poisoned children often don't get help from government cleanup programs. Janyia Williams, right, has a history of lead poisoning.



SECRECY: For decades, no warning of hazards CHILDREN: Thousands are raised in harm's way LEGACY: Nearby soil is contaminated with lead

By TINA LAM AND SHAWN WINDSOR
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

For two decades, toxic lead dust descended from a smelter onto an east-side Detroit neighborhood. The dust fell as much as 24 hours a day, settling on cars, gardens, backyards, parks, a federal housing complex and an elementary school.

At times, nearly 2 pounds of lead spewed each hour from the 105-foot-high smokestack of the Master Metals plant on East Nevada near Mt. Elliott. Dump trucks kicked up lead dust from their tires as they rumbled in and out of the smelter.

Since the late 1970s, government officials have known of health hazards in the neighborhood. But nearly 20 years after the smelter closed, the neighborhood has never been cleaned up.

No one has ever assessed how many children were poisoned. And government agencies responsible for regulating the smelter have told few parents of the dangers, despite federal rules requiring it.

Why this happened is a story of indifference, lost paperwork, loopholes and the invisibility of a neighborhood.

A Free Press investigation found that the federal Environmental Protection Agency ignored its own experts four years ago when the experts raised concerns about lead contamination near the site.

The EPA ordered a cleanup of the smelter in 1998, but tested just seven spots outside the smelter grounds — only a fraction of what was recommended by agency consultants. Despite the limited testing, the agency decided no neighborhood cleanup was needed.

Elsewhere in the country, federal and state officials have done massive cleanups of neigh-



CHP SOMKODVILLA/Detroit Free Press

TEST RESULTS

Prof. Howard Mielke of Xavier University in New Orleans takes soil samples near the smelter and finds lead levels that would warrant cleanup in other states. 8A

borhoods near old lead smelters to eliminate contamination that can harm young children and stunt their development. Activists and local officials forced many of those cleanups by pressuring regulatory agencies.

"There are very few smelters where there is not contamination in the surrounding area," said John Drexler, a toxicologist at the University of Colorado-Boulder who has done studies for the EPA of how lead smelters pollute neighborhoods.

At Detroit's smelter, he said, "There is no question contamination would have migrated

Please see SMELTER, Page 6A

► KNIGHT RIDDER



SNOW SHOWERS
Cloudy and cold.
Jerry Nodak's forecast, 5F

18 HIGH
8 LOW



INDEX
Volume 112 Number 33
Published Tuesday, Jan. 22, 2003
Printed in the United States

Bridge	4F	Corrections	2A	Jumble	5C	Sports	1E
Business	1B	Crossword	5F	The List	2F	TechToday	2A
Classified	1C	Editorials	10A	Movie Guide	3B	Television	4F
Comics	5F, 6F	Horoscope	4F	Obituaries	5B	The Way We Live	1F

INFORMATION FOR LIFE

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SIGNS OF A DEAD BUSINESS

RIGHT: Signs discourage trespassing at the abandoned Master Metals site in Detroit.

NEXT RIGHT: A locker room shows a building's run-down condition.

NEXT PAGE: A bike wheel and other debris litter the area.

FAR RIGHT, NEXT PAGE: A shallow pool of stagnant water sits in the center of the site.



PHOTO BY CHRIS BARNES/DETROIT FREE PRESS

SMELTER Hazards remain in and around lead processing site

From Page 1A

beyond the smelter boundaries."

The Free Press hired a soil expert to test the neighborhood surrounding the Master Metals plant. The consultant collected 97 samples within 1.8 miles of the smelter in November and found 10 locations with lead levels exceeding 400 parts per million, a level considered a health concern by the EPA. Some samples showed levels as high as 5,800 parts per million.

About 70,000 people live within 2 miles of the smelter. The poor, mostly black neighborhood is home to eight schools, 16 parks and about 5,600 children under age 5. Thousands of children in this critical age range for lead exposure have grown up here.

Krainwood is a grid of tidy streets lined with small ranch houses. Petunias and roses burst from flower gardens in the spring. Vegetables arrive in the summer. Homes are repainted, given new roofs and swept free of leaves in the fall.

Yet there is no trace of the neighborhood in EPA photos or diagrams of the smelter. It's as if the Krainwood neighborhood didn't exist.

Few who live there now know that the smelter existed or that

federal officials had declared the industrial property a public health hazard and spent 10 months attempting to decontaminate it.

The EPA relied on neighborhood residents to say whether enough was being done to protect them. But it wasn't until two years after most of the cleanup was done that the agency sent letters to just 30 residents, telling them about the danger and giving them an opportunity to be heard, EPA records show. There never was a single public meeting.

Renee Owens lives about a half-mile from the smelter in a house on Keystone. A sample taken by the Free Press consultant showed 714 parts per million of lead in the yard where her seven children play, well over the 400 level the EPA has relied on to prompt cleanups in other cities.

"I never knew there was any smelter near here," said Owens, who moved into the neighborhood in 1998.

Her grandchild, DeQuan, 2, and her daughter, Natasha, 9, have been diagnosed as lead poisoned. There's no way to know the source of the children's poisoning. It could be chipping paint in Owens' home. It could be the soil. It could be both.

Owens would like to know, but

no health official has ever visited to find out — as has happened around smelters in other states.

Case closed — but why?

The Nevada Street smelter operated from 1955 until 1984. After it was abandoned and torn down, it became just another hazardous, empty stretch of land that framed a neighborhood not many seemed to notice.

During the last few years of the smelter operation, Wayne County inspectors cited the plant several times for operating without proper pollution-control equipment or permits. An exact tally of violations was not available because records are incomplete.

For most of the smelter's life, however, there were no U.S. limits on how much lead it could emit. A county test in 1971 showed the plant emitted nearly 2 pounds of lead per hour through its smokestack, which was four times what Australia would have allowed at the time, a county official wrote.

According to the EPA, the companies that owned the plant included Consolidated Smelting

Corp., Electric Auto-Lite Co., Eltra Corp., the Master Metals division of National Lead Co. (now called NL Industries) and Industrial Smelting Corp.

The EPA ordered six companies including NL Industries, Ford Motor Co., General Motors Corp. and DaimlerChrysler Corp. to pay for the cost of decontaminating the smelter property. The auto companies supplied the smelter with truck and car batteries.

From 1955 to the late 1970s, the plant recycled these batteries by heating them in a furnace.

Pete Warner, former manager of Wayne County's air pollution laboratory, recalls that health officials were concerned about the smelter in the late 1970s. His agency put air monitoring equipment in some apartments at the Sojourner Truth public housing complex on Nevada, across the street from the smelter.

But results from those tests — along with most of the government records about the smelter and its pollution history — can't be found. Wayne County closed its air pollution division last year and transferred its operation and records to the state Department of Environmental Quality. DEQ officials, despite repeated attempts, said they can't locate the records.

Whether those records were around in the summer of 1987, three years after the plant closed, is another matter. The DEQ, in those days still part of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, studied the smelter file to determine whether there was a toxic hazard.

The EPA had contracted the state to provide initial analysis of industrial sites around Detroit and to make

TO BE HEARD ABOUT THE SMELTER

For comments and questions about the status of the Master Metals lead smelter site, contact:

- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.** Write to: Jodi Swanson-Wilson, Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, U.S. EPA Region 5, 77 West Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60604; send e-mail to citizen.complaints@epa.gov, or call 312-886-0879 or toll-free at 800-621-8431.
- **Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.** Constitution Hall, 525 W. Allegan St., P.O. Box 30473, Lansing 48909-7973, or call 517-373-7917. In metro Detroit, contact: DEQ Southeast Michigan District Office, 38980 Seven Mile Road, Livonia 48152-1006, 734-953-9905.
- **City of Detroit.** Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, City of Detroit, Executive Office, Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, 2 Woodward Ave., Suite 1126, Detroit 48226. Or call the city's Neighborhood City Halls at 313-224-3450.
- **Detrometers Working for Environmental Justice.** 12101 Mack Service Drive, Detroit 48215; 313-821-1064.

recommendations regarding potential inspections, and thus, possible cleanups.

The Master Metals paperwork, culled by the Free Press from EPA and DNR files, landed on the desk of a DNR intern from Michigan State University.

Documents reviewed by the intern included a 1981 report by a former owner of the plant, NL Industries, based in Houston. The smelter operator disclosed in the report it had left hazardous waste, heavy metals and chemicals at the site.

According to a site assessment form dated Aug. 24, 1987, the intern wrote that "there is no information in either EPA or Michigan DNR files which indicates that a release of a hazardous substance at this facility occurred."

Because of this, he concluded, no further inspection was necessary. It is not known whether the intern had access to the Wayne County air pollution data from the smelter collected in the late 1970s that showed lead was drifting over the neighborhood across the street.

To experts who study lead smelters, the 1987 decision to close the case was inexplicable. Smelters by their very nature release lead in the air through their stacks.

DEQ officials say they had a smaller regulatory staff 15 years ago than now and had too much ground to cover. Dipo Oyinsan, district supervisor for the southeastern Michigan office of DEQ, said he doesn't remember much from the Master Metals case back then.

"Try to envision four staff members evaluating five counties, including Wayne," he said. "Now, there are five just for Detroit."

Although the state had concluded that no pollution escaped the site, evidence was mounting that the smelter property itself was highly contaminated.

In February 1987, seven months before the state made its decision, tests by a company that bought part of the old smelter property showed heavy lead con-

Please see next page

Pinpointing pollution

Near lead smelters in other cities, regulators have taken hundreds of soil samples as far as 20 miles away to test for contamination. Around the Master Metals smelter in Detroit, the Environmental Protection Agency ordered just seven samples one-quarter mile from the plant.

The EPA's 1998 tests found two spots above the 400-parts-per-million standard — anything higher the EPA deems unsafe for children. But EPA officials said the highest reading was normal for that area, and therefore no more testing was needed.

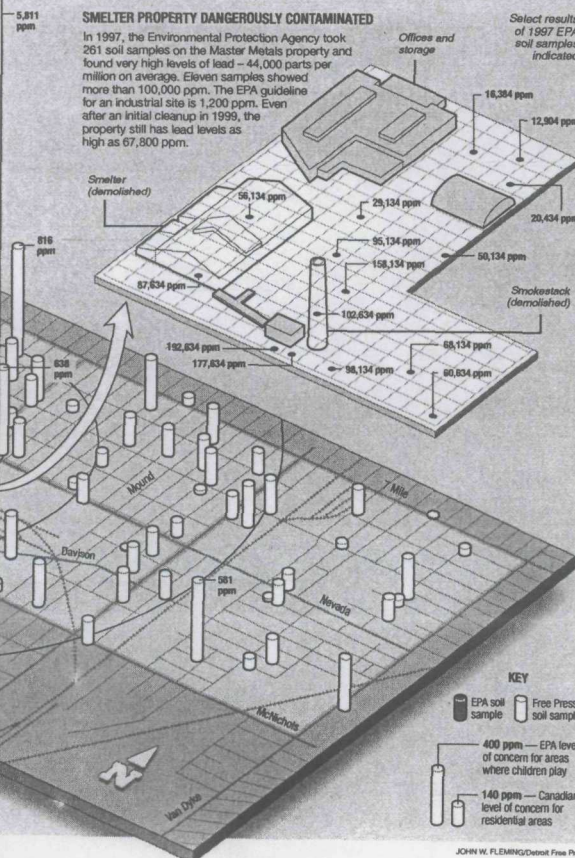
A soil expert hired by the Free Press took 97 samples within 1.8 miles of the smelter. Ten of the samples were higher than 400 ppm; four of those were higher than 1,000 ppm.

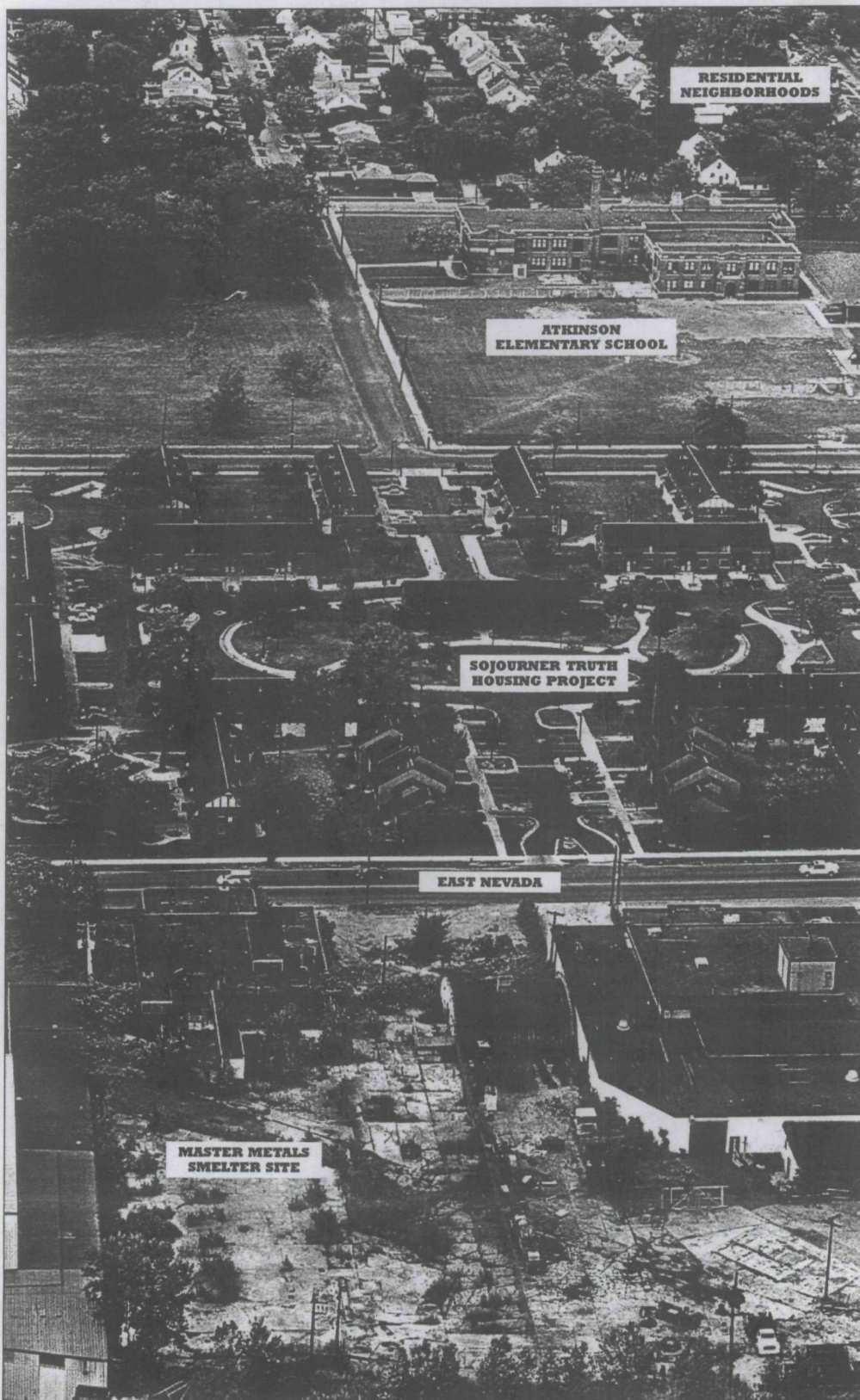
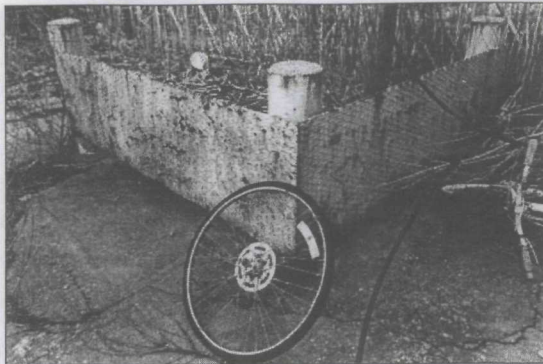
ABOUT THE PLANT

The smelter, which closed in 1984, recycled lead from batteries and metal scrap by melting the items and separating out the lead. That lead then could be reused in various products. An old car battery contained at least 18 pounds of lead.



For more information about these soil samples, go to www.freep.com/lead





From previous page

tamination of soil and groundwater across from the site.

A year later, in 1988, a city inspection found that hazardous waste had been left behind at the plant by Industrial Smelting Co., the last firm to own it. The city shared its concerns in a letter to the Department of Natural Resources. Nothing happened.

In 1996, after the site had been vacant for at least a dozen years, the city referred the site to the EPA for possible cleanup. The city's action came from an interest in redeveloping the land, city records show. There is no mention of concern about health hazards to the neighborhood.

During the next two years, EPA officials studied the old smelter property. They collected 261 samples from the site and found it extremely contaminated. The average sample contained 44,323 parts per million of lead, 36 times the level at which the EPA mandates a cleanup of an industrial site. But many samples were much higher: 11 contained more than 100,000 parts per million, including one that was 252,000.

Samples along the smelter's parking lot — near neighborhood sidewalks and homes — contained 20,584 parts per million of lead.

Federal inspectors described waste piles of fine, flour-like dust laced with hazardous levels of lead, cadmium and mercury, easily accessible through collapsing buildings or vulnerable to wind and rain runoff. They also found cancer-causing PCBs, asbestos, and assorted chemicals.

In 1997, the EPA declared the smelter property an imminent danger and ordered it cleaned up. Yet children who lived across the street used one of its brick buildings as a clubhouse and pretended to fish in an orange-tinted pond on site.

Marvin Nance, now 13, who lives in the Sojourner Truth housing, said the entrance of the smelter building was open then, and he and his friends would play there at dusk. They also played at the pond. "Someone would put a fish in there and we would pretend to go fishing," he said.

The entrance has since been boarded up off and on.

Finally, in 1998, workers wearing protective environmental suits and masks spent 10 months at the old smelter hauling away asbestos and lead-contaminated dirt.

Jeff Koch, owner of Judd Trucking next door to the smelter site, and his employees watched as the protected cleanup crew drained the tainted pond and tore down buildings filled with as much as six inches of lead dust, according to an EPA report.

"They were in these big suits, and we were working right next to them dressed like this," Koch said, pointing to his daily outfit of jeans and a T-shirt.

Aggressiveness pays

During the late 1970s, in the final years the smelter operated, kids in the neighborhood were turning up with dangerously high amounts of lead in their bodies. Most troubling were the levels found in children

Please see page 8A

KIDS IN PROXIMITY TO POISON

This view shows the proximity of areas with children to the abandoned Master Metals site in Detroit, which for decades spewed lead dust from East Nevada near Mt. Elliott. Nearby locales include the Sojourner Truth housing complex and Atkinson Elementary School.

THE SMELTER'S HISTORY

1955: Consolidated Smelting Corp. opens the smelter.

1971: Tests by Wayne County officials show nearly 2 pounds of lead dust is being released every hour from the smelter's smokestack. At the time the United States doesn't have a lead air standard. But the amount is four times what Australia would allow.

1970S AND EARLY 1980S: Wayne County environmental regulators issue violation notices for air pollution control equipment that was lacking or didn't work.

1978: In response to lawsuits by environmentalists, the Environmental Protection Agency sets the nation's first limits on the amount of lead in air emissions by industries.

LATE 1970S: Wayne County officials put air-monitoring equipment inside the Sojourner Truth public housing projects and find high lead levels at certain times of the day. Doctors find children living there who have very high lead levels in their blood.

ABOUT 1984: The plant closes.

1982: The Michigan Department of Natural Resources determines the site is a low priority for inspection. The decision is made by a student intern.

1987-88: Testing by Cadillac Coffee, which had bought part of the smelter site, finds high levels of lead, zinc and cadmium in the soil and groundwater.

1988: The City of Detroit sends bankrupt Industrial Smelting, the smelter's last owner, a letter saying inspectors found hazardous waste on the site.

MAY 1996: The City of Detroit refers the site to the EPA for cleanup consideration.

AUGUST 1996: The EPA does an initial assessment of the smelter property, finding hazardous levels of lead and cadmium.

AUGUST 1997: The EPA collects 261 soil samples from the smelter property and finds it highly contaminated. Lead levels average 44,323 ppm, but some are as high as 252,000 ppm.

DECEMBER 1997: The state Health Department determines the site poses a public health hazard.

AUGUST 1998: The EPA sets a \$700,000 cleanup plan for the smelter property. It orders Ford Motor Co., General Motors Corp. and Chrysler Corp. — which had items recycled there — along with NL Industries, AlliedSignal, and property owner 4740 E. Nevada LLC, to pay for it. The EPA does not notify neighborhood residents about the cleanup plan.

AUGUST 1999: An initial cleanup of the smelter property is completed, but lead levels as high as 63,000 ppm remain. The EPA for the first time seeks to determine whether the neighborhood surrounding the smelter is contaminated and directs seven soil samples to be taken within a quarter-mile of the smelter. Despite two samples with 717 ppm and 528 ppm, the EPA determines there is no off-site problem.

OCTOBER 2001: Wayne County environmental officials send their regulatory files detailing the smelter's pollution history and earlier air test results to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. The files can no longer be found.

DECEMBER 2001: The EPA publishes ads and sends notices to 30 residents and three businesses seeking comment about a second phase of the smelter property cleanup. One person responds. No public meeting is held.

JANUARY 2003: The second phase of the cleanup still has not begun.

Sources: Documents from Environmental Protection Agency, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Wayne County and Free Press research.



TAKING A SAMPLE: Daniah Beavers, 8 months, left, sits in her stroller while Howard Mielke, right, of Xavier University in New Orleans takes a soil sample from Jerome Welch's house near Dwyer and Hildale in east Detroit. The test found 242 parts per million of lead in the soil; the Environmental Protection Agency says 400 and above is a concern.

SOIL TESTING NEAR SMELTER

High lead levels found in samples

10 readings would prompt cleanup in other states

By TINA LAM
AND SHAWN WINDSOR
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Neighborhood yards surrounding the Master Metals smelter in northeast Detroit contain high levels of lead that would be enough to prompt cleanups in other states, the Free Press has found.

Soil samples taken by an expert hired by the newspaper found 10 locations where lead levels exceeded 400 parts per million — the amount the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has used in cleanups around smelters in other cities. An additional 57 spots had lead levels greater than 140 ppm, a level the Canadian government considers excessive for residential areas.

Some of the samples showed extremely high levels of lead. A reading of 5,811 ppm at a home on Syracuse Street was the second-highest reading of 406 samples taken by the Free Press throughout the Detroit metro area.

A sample from a yard at a home on Hasse Street had 2,911 ppm, and one on Wexford Street had 1,787 ppm. Across the street from the smelter, in an area in front of the Sojourner Truth pub-

lic housing projects, a sample had 1,611 ppm, the Free Press found.

The sampling was done by Howard Mielke, a professor of environmental toxicology at Xavier University in New Orleans, who has studied soil contamination for more than 20 years. Mielke and his team took 97 soil samples in five census tracts surrounding the

A reading of 5,811 ppm at a home on Syracuse Street was the second-highest of 406 samples.

smelter in November. The team took samples from the top inch of soil, air-dried and sieved it, and then tested it for the presence of lead and other metals.

While the tests provide the most comprehensive assessment since the 1970s of soil contamination in the smelter neighborhood, experts say far more samples would need to be taken to determine the extent of lead fallout in the community. The EPA based its decision not to clean up the neighborhood on just seven soil samples taken in 1999. In the

1970s, Wayne County officials did at least some soil sampling in the neighborhood, but the files have been lost.

Around smelters in other states, regulators have taken hundreds or thousands of soil samples in recent years.

Mielke said it's difficult to say, based on his tests alone, whether the lead in the Master Metals neighborhood came from the smelter, or from paint or the exhaust of leaded gasoline.

Mielke said that on average, the lead levels in the 97 smelter-area samples were not higher than those he found in other parts of Detroit. Detroit has higher lead levels than the suburbs, his tests have found.

Several toxicologists contacted by the Free Press said more tests are needed in the area to determine whether there should be a cleanup. A comprehensive study would include as many as five samples per yard, a sampling of dust in homes and widespread testing of children's blood-lead levels.

Contact TINA LAM at 794-432-6502 or lam@freepress.com. Contact SHAWN WINDSOR at 313-223-6487 or windor@freepress.com.



NEIGHBORHOOD SAMPLES: Howard Mielke, left, and assistant Eric Powell, of Xavier University, take soil samples from the neighborhood around the abandoned Master Metals smelter in east Detroit. Mielke was hired by the Free Press to take soil samples.

SMELTER CLEANUPS

Little has been done to assess how much lead fallout remains in the Detroit neighborhood surrounding the old Master Metals smelter. In other states, regulators have done far more to assess the dangers and clean up neighborhoods.

BUNKER HILL, IDAHO Gulf Resources lead smelter
Operated: 1917-1982. Cleanup cost: Over \$200 million.

What happened: Tests showed lead levels were high in nearly 2,000 yards as far as 4 miles away. In 1986, a massive cleanup began that has included removing soil and cleaning up a contaminated river nearby. During the initial cleanup, soil was removed when it had at least 1,000 parts per million of lead; it now includes soil at 700 ppm.

DALLAS RSR Corp. lead smelter

Operated: 1930s-1964. Cleanup cost: \$27 million.

What happened: In 1984, lead-contaminated soil was removed from yards within a half-mile of the smelter. In the early 1990s, additional contamination was found farther away. In 1993, state regulators took soil samples from 6,800 properties and removed contaminated soil from another 420 properties where lead levels were over 500 ppm. In 2002, they sampled soil at 126 more homes and cleaned up 10. Neighbors have been awarded \$36 million from lawsuits.

DENVER ASARCO Inc. lead smelters

Operated: Late 1800s-early 1900s. Cleanup cost: More than \$38 million.
What happened: Soil with lead levels of 540 ppm or higher was removed and replaced in 700 yards in five neighborhoods near the two old smelters.

DETROIT Master Metals lead smelter

Operated: 1955-1983. Cleanup cost: Less than \$1 million spent so far.
What happened: Cleanup has focused solely on the smelter property. In 1999, the Environmental Protection Agency took seven soil samples within one-eighth mile of the smelter and determined no further testing or neighborhood cleanup was necessary. One sample showed 717 ppm and another 528 ppm. Tests commissioned by the Free Press found 10 locations within a mile and a half of the smelter with 500 ppm or more of lead.

EL PASO, TEXAS ASARCO Inc. lead and copper smelter

Operated: 1880s-1999. Cleanup cost: \$2 million.

What happened: The EPA took more than 2,000 soil samples within a 3-mile radius of the smelter and is replacing soil at 60 homes, those with more than 500 ppm lead. Pressure came from state and local officials, many of whom live in the upscale neighborhood.

INDIANAPOLIS RSR Corp. lead smelter

Operated: Until 1979. Cleanup cost: \$8 million.

What happened: At first, EPA officials said there was no off-site contamination. But after neighbors sued and pressured for tests, contaminated yards were identified. More than 300 yards, where lead levels were 400 ppm or higher, were cleaned up between 1993 and 1999.

OMAHA, NEB. ASARCO Inc. lead smelter

Operated: Late 1800s-1997. Cleanup cost: \$10 million so far, but could reach \$100 million.

What happened: A city councilman pressured the EPA to do soil testing. About 2,000 yards in a 20-square-mile area have been tested. So far, more than 200 yards, where lead levels exceeded 400 ppm, have had soil replaced. The highest lead level found in yards is 2,700 ppm.

HAMBURG, PA. Price Battery Smelter

Operated: 1940-1975. Cleanup cost: \$3 million spent on cleanup of smelter itself; cost of neighborhood testing still unknown.

What happened: The EPA is still testing and has found high lead levels inside and outside 400 homes. The EPA has told residents it will pay for a cleanup.

HERCULEANEUM, MO. Doe Run Co. lead smelter

Operated: Still operating. Cleanup cost: \$12 million.

What happened: Nearly half the small children within half a mile of the smelter are lead poisoned. Soil has been cleaned up at more than 140 homes where yards showed at least 400 ppm of lead. Doe Run has agreed to purchase 166 heavily contaminated homes where small children live.

THROOP, PA. Marjol Battery Plant

Operated: 1962-1982.

Cleanup cost: More than \$14 million for smelter site and homes.

What happened: Dust and soil at more than 400 homes within a half-mile of the smelter were sampled; lead levels as high as 19,000 ppm were found. Soil from 133 yards were replaced and interiors of 107 homes cleaned of lead dust.

Sources: Free Press research

REACTION IN DETROIT

City officials pledge to help families

BY EMILIA ASKARI
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Detroit officials vowed Tuesday to get more help to families with lead-poisoned children, seek increased state funding to make homes safe and continue correcting problems in the city's lead-abatement programs.

"If there's a potential to respond to inadequacies, we will do

that," Dr. Noble Maseru, the city's newly appointed health director, said at a news conference at the Detroit Athletic Club. "If there's inefficiency, we will make the appropriate corrections."

Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, questioned by reporters about a series of Free Press reports that began Tuesday, said he will seek more lead cleanup funding from officials in Lansing, including the

Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Quality.

"What we hope is on the state level we can work with our new Legislature, our new governor, our new DNR director and our new DEQ director to try to help them understand how critical it is to put the dollars where they can have the biggest impact in those areas of contamination," he said.

Kilpatrick said that 65 percent of the bond money raised by the 1998 Clean Michigan Initiative was supposed to come to Detroit for various environmental cleanups. "At this time, they're not. So that's a huge issue for us to champion on the state level," he said.

Meanwhile, an official from the Detroit Planning Department said she will ask the City Council today to approve a new program de-

signed to help renters remove lead paint hazards from homes.

Jannie Warren, general manager of the department's housing division, said that if the council gives the OK, it will allow the city to direct \$1.5 million in federal grant money to low-income renters with lead-poisoned children. The program could begin offering lead-abatement grants of up to \$12,000 by the end of this week.

Warren said Tuesday the city will make sure an unused \$3-million cleanup fund for home owners, highlighted in the newspaper's report, will be spent within six months. Warren said that 200 home owners can expect to see some of that money spent on their houses this spring.

Contact EMILIA ASKARI at 313-223-4461 or askari@freepress.com.



AT PLAY: Maquell Butts, 5, left, and brother Marcell, 4, enjoy an August day near their grandmother's house by Detroit's Krainz Park. Soil in the area showed a level of 155 parts per million, which is within the U.S. safety standard, but above the level of concern set by Canada.

CRIP BOMCOCK/LA/Owens Free Press

SMELTER | For many reasons, no cleanup

From Page 7A

who lived and played in the dirt patches on the grounds of the Sojourner Truth complex, directly across Nevada from the smelter.

Dr. Regine Aranow, a pediatrician who directed the poison control center at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit at the time, said the city tested kids for lead at Sojourner Truth and found children poisoned far beyond the blood-lead level that was the standard then — 25 micrograms per deciliter.

"I had kids in the 100s there," Aranow said.

Today, the blood-lead level standard is 10, and some medical researchers say it should be five. Studies have shown that a child with a blood-lead level of just 10 will lose from two to eight IQ points. Double that number of IQ points will be lost by a child who has a blood-lead level of 20.

Aranow says the city found so many poisoned kids at Sojourner Truth that the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) resettled part of the grounds. New grass caps the lead-tainted soil so kids can't come in direct contact with it.

Aranow worked with lead-poisoned kids being treated at Children's Hospital. There was no comprehensive lead control program at the time or the money to study children's lead levels throughout the smelter neighborhood.

Even now, few children in the Krainwood neighborhood are tested, according to families and state Health Department records. No one has pushed to track the kids in that area more closely.

Lifetime of health problems

Lead is a neurotoxin that can reduce a child's intelligence and cause a lifetime of health problems. Even low-level lead exposure can damage developing brains in babies and young children. The toxin can reduce IQs, cause learning problems, slow growth and dull hearing.

As a result of such dangers, activists and elected officials in many cities across the country have pushed for cleanups in smelter neighborhoods.

Bob Buckley, the EPA's project manager for the cleanup at the Master Metals site, said people in most neighborhoods come up to EPA field agents and want to know why they are there. But that didn't happen in the Krainwood neighborhood, he said.

"The squeaky wheel gets the grease," Buckley said.

When examining sites nationwide, researchers have collected dozens, if not hundreds or thousands, of soil samples in neighborhoods around smelters. In some cases, they have taken samples up to 20 miles from a smelter.

Yet at Detroit's Master Metals smelter, the EPA made its decision not to clean up the neighborhood based on the seven soil samples taken less than one-quarter of a mile from the smelter.

It's unclear why so few samples were taken. In December 1998, a toxicologist and project manager for Ecology and Environment Inc., a firm hired by the EPA, sent a report to the agency explaining why at least 20 samples were needed.

"It appears likely that airborne contaminants have been carried beyond the boundaries" of the smelter, the EPA consultant said. "Lead, which is the primary contaminant at the site, poses its greatest risk to young children. Therefore, the residential area north of the site is of particular concern."

Natasha Bridges has lived in that area her whole life. On Conley, three blocks from the old smelter.

She is 21. She has never been tested for lead poisoning. She had no idea the smelter ever existed.

When told that an expert hired by the Free Press found high lead levels in front of a house across the street from her, she was surprised.

"That's not a good thing," she said. "Kids play in the grass and the dirt here all the time."

Of the samples taken for the EPA, one was collected upwind as a control and the others were taken downwind. The highest downwind registered 538 parts per million, higher than the EPA's 400-parts-per-million threshold for concern in areas where kids play.

The so-called control sample — what the EPA was considering to be normal for that part of Detroit — was the highest of all, at 717 parts per million. At the time, investigators dismissed that high reading as not being of concern or an indication of smelter contamination.

The EPA said the area already had lead pollution, probably left over from the days when lead was used in gasoline, and that lead it detected couldn't be blamed on the smelter.

In a recent interview, the EPA official who oversaw the cleanup of the smelter said the results prove there was no need to do further sampling.

"If we'd found higher levels in the samples we had, we would

have done more sampling," said Buckley, the EPA official in charge of overseeing the Detroit smelter site. "The emissions ceased 20 years ago. What might have been there then is gone."

But according to the U.S. Agency for Toxic Disease Registry, lead does not dissipate, biodegrade or decay. Instead, "the lead deposited into dust and soil becomes a long-term source of lead exposure for children."

Pat Thornton, the project manager for the state DEQ, said she felt the EPA didn't push more testing in the neighborhood because "it would open a can of worms."

Though the DEQ could have pushed for more testing in the neighborhood, it didn't. Steve Kitley, a program manager for remediation and redevelopment in the Wayne County office of the DEQ, said his agency was involved in meetings early last fall regarding the cleanup and that they had questions about the neighborhood.

The DEQ and EPA last met in late November. Kitley said they looked at the EPA's sampling data.

"The way they were approaching it was fine," he said.

Smelter experts, including within the EPA, question whether any conclusion can be drawn by the handful of tests done by the agency in Detroit. An EPA smelter cleanup project manager in Idaho said lead fallout can drift as far away as 20 miles and when it lands, it isn't necessarily distributed evenly.

"There are good reasons to think the area of incidence at your smelter goes beyond what they've looked at," said Cami Grandinetti, the EPA project manager in Idaho. The EPA project manager in charge of a lead smelter cleanup in Bunker Hill, Idaho. The area is heavily contaminated. A smelter there once produced a quarter of the nation's lead. In Idaho, health officials pushed hard to get hundreds of lead-contaminated yards cleaned up, Grandinetti said.

'Thorn in their side'

In Indianapolis, neighborhood residents demanded of the EPA that their yards near a smelter be cleaned up.

"We became a thorn in their side," said Patty Daviau, 48, who lives across from the old smelter. Daviau was incensed when city officials told neighbors their children were poisoned from lead paint. "I said, 'That's not where the lead is coming from.'"

The EPA in Indianapolis ordered a cleanup of the smelter

site. But as in Detroit, the EPA initially did little testing in the neighborhood. Daviau and other activists sued and forced the EPA to do more testing. The results showed high levels of lead in the soil. The soil has been replaced in more than 300 yards.

And in Omaha, Neb., a city councilman insisted the EPA investigate the cause of high lead poisoning rates among that city's children. Soil was tested in the yards of 2,000 homes in an area 20 miles around an old smelter site. More than 200 yards have been cleaned up where lead was above 400 ppm.

Bert Garcia, an EPA official who is supervising the cleanup of a smelter site in Eureka, Utah, said the extent of neighborhood cleanups varies from state to state, and the EPA relies heavily on state environmental regulators for guidance.

"They invite us in," he said. "The aggressive ones have a long history of mining or smelting and are looking for these issues. But they aren't all aggressive."

Still no answers

Almost 20 years after it closed, the Master Metals smelter still is not fully decontaminated. The most recent tests show lead levels as high as 67,800 ppm remain.

Weeds and broken concrete still litter the site. Because the city, state and companies paying for the cleanup are in disagreement over the final stage of the cleanup, the project has stalled.

As a poor and mostly minority area, the neighborhood is supposed to receive extra attention from the EPA as part of the agency's environmental justice agenda, begun in the Clinton administration and continued under current director Christie Whitman.

So far, less than \$1 million has been spent on the cleanup. This is cheap compared to the hundreds of millions spent on smelter cleanups elsewhere.

The bulk of the money came from NL Industries, Ford, DaimlerChrysler and General Motors. Spokespeople for Ford, DaimlerChrysler and General Motors all said their role was simply to do what the EPA asked, rather than determine themselves what needed to be done.

National Lead officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Because of the EPA's limited smelter-site cleanup, potential property investors face deep restrictions forbidding digging and building there, making it useful for little more than a parking lot.

THE PROBLEM AND ITS PREVENTION

LEAD LEVELS

Measured in micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood (mcg/dL):

WHAT LEVELS MEAN	0	10-14	15-19	20-44	45+
5-9: Some experts say poisoning begins					
10 and above: Considered the level of concern by U.S. Centers for Disease Control. A child may have an IQ drop of 2-8 points, research indicates, for each increase of 10 mcg/dL.					
Follow-up blood tests		✓	✓	✓	✓
Clean home for lead			✓	✓	✓
Referral to public health department				✓	✓
Home inspection and evaluation				✓	✓
Chelation therapy required					✓

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Michigan Department of Community Health, Detroit Health Department; compiled by MANDRA LLOYD/Detroit Free Press

JOHN W. FLEMING/Detroit Free Press

PREVENTING LEAD POISONING

- **Sources of lead exposure:** Lead-based paint, house dust, soil, drinking water, some ceramic dishes and home health remedies. Some hobbies may also involve lead exposure, including fishing and making jewelry and stained glass.
- **What lead does to the body:** Babies' and young children's brains and nervous systems are the most sensitive to the toxic effects of even low-level lead exposure. Lead damages developing brains, reduces IQs, causes behavior and learning problems, slows growth, and also can cause hearing problems and headaches. In adults it can cause problems during pregnancy, high blood pressure, digestive and nerve disorders, memory problems and muscle and joint pain.
- **Protecting your family:** Be aware that homes built before 1978 — and especially those built before 1950 — may contain lead-based paint. Wet-mop and wet-dust weekly with automatic dishwasher detergent, which attracts lead dust. Pay special attention to window wells. Feed children a diet high in calcium and iron. Wash toys, pacifiers and hands frequently — especially before meals and bedtime. Keep children away from soil next to a home's foundation, a likely spot for contamination. Avoid tracking soil into the house by using doormats or removing shoes before entering. Plant grass to cover bare soil.
- **Symptoms of lead poisoning:** Because the first symptoms of lead poisoning are very general and are common to other disorders, they are easy to misdiagnose. They include nausea, stomachache, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, sluggishness, colic, weakness and dehydration. Other symptoms may include mild anemia, developmental disorders and sterility. The most severe cases can involve convulsions, paralysis and even death. To test a child or yourself for lead exposure, contact your doctor or local health department to schedule a blood test.

TO GET INVOLVED

- **A town hall meeting about lead** will be held Feb. 18 from 6 to 8 p.m. at St. Christopher Church, 7800 Woodmont. Detroit. Free lead tests will be offered along with a seminar from health and housing officials. For more information, call 313-224-3461.
- **The Detroit Lead Partnership** is a grassroots group of community organizations, citizens, and governmental officials concerned about the problem of lead poisoning in Detroit. For more information send e-mail to: detroitleadpartnership@yahoo.com or call 313-961-4780, press 1, and leave a message anytime.
- **Detroit's Working for Environmental Justice** is a grassroots organization that recently formed a task force to study the effects of lead contamination from the soil and environment. To learn more, call 313-821-1064 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays.
- **The Michigan Lead Safe Partnership** is a newly formed organization working to fight lead poisoning statewide. Send messages by e-mail to davemec@voyager.net.

TO BE HEARD

- **Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick**, 2 Woodward Ave., 1126 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, Detroit 48226; or call 313-224-3400.
- **Gov. Jennifer Granholm**, P.O. Box 30013, Lansing 48909, or call her Lansing office at 517-335-7858; Detroit office at 313-456-0010; or Upper Peninsula office at 906-228-2850. Or send e-mail on the Web at www.michigan.gov/gov/.
- **To contact your state representative**, see www.house.state.mi.us/LocateRep.asp or call 517-373-7943.
- **Letters to the Editor**, Detroit Free Press, 600 W. Fort St., Detroit 48226, or fax to 313-222-6774, or send e-mail to letters@freepress.com (no attachments, please).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- **Michigan's Lead Hazard Remediation Program:** 866-691-5323 or www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,1-132-2940_2955_2983_00.html.
- **The National Lead Information Center:** 800-424-5323.
- **Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning:** 202-543-1147 or www.aecpl.org/.
- **The Environmental Protection Agency:** www.epa.gov/opptintr/lead/index.html.
- **City of Detroit Lead-Based Paint Task Force:** 313-224-9174, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Even then, the site must be watched for 30 years to make sure the lead left at the site stays there.

But the city wants to reuse the land for something more than a place to put cars — which means the site must be cleaned more thoroughly than the standard the EPA has set.

Kelly King wants answers, too. King lives in a two-story apartment in the eastern edge of Sojourner Truth with her daughter, Kenya, 9, and her son, Malik, 11.

It has been roughly 20 years since HUD laid out on public housing grounds to cover the lead-laden dirt.

King's son, Malik, who has lived at Sojourner Truth all his life, was diagnosed with lead poi-

soning when he was 1. His mother has no idea why.

There is no lead in the paint on her walls. The apartments are brick on the outside.

"I never knew there was a lead plant," she says.

She said she wonders if the plant's toxic legacy explains why her son struggles in school and suffers from asthma.

She doesn't know — and wonders if she ever will.

Contact TINA LAM at 794-4302 or lam@freepress.com. Contact SHAWN WINDSOR at 313-222-6487 or windso@freepress.com. Staff writers Angelle Soenar, Wendy Wendland-Bouyer and Tamara Audi contributed to this report.

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Hazards lurking in soil as children play

High lead levels abound in Detroit and metro area

January 23, 2003

BY WENDY WENDLAND-BOWYER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Lead-contaminated soil is widespread throughout metro Detroit, especially in the urban core where many of Michigan's poisoned children live, a Free Press investigation has found.

Soil tests commissioned by the newspaper show dozens of locations -- from Rochester Hills to Detroit to Canton -- with lead levels that have triggered cleanups in other U.S. communities.

But most of the sites will never be cleaned up. That's because the national strategy for preventing lead poisoning focuses on paint, the main contamination



Stories that offer solutions and hope in the effort to improve the lives of Michigan's children.

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source for children.

Meanwhile, thousands of children in America's older, industrial cities grow up playing in toxic dirt in their backyards and neighborhoods.

Some scientists say the nation needs to pay more attention to lead in soil, because it increases the exposure for children and adds to lead buildup in their bodies.

"One of the things that bothered me for a long time is what I think might be construed as an overemphasis on lead in houses," said Dave Johnson, a chemistry professor at the State University of New York in Syracuse who has studied lead contamination in soil.

"There is no question that lead paint is a hazard. But I think we might do some of our children a disservice if we don't look any

A 1930 advertisement in National Geographic magazine boasts the high-powered performance of Ethyl leaded gas. But the production of leaded gas was phased out in the United States in the late 1970s when it was determined that it caused health problems.

A CALL TO ACTION

The Detroit Lead Partnership issued a call to action last year with ways to curb lead poisoning. Among them:

Increase the number of lead-safe homes. Increase number of homes abated with by federal funds, help landlords to reduce lead hazards by exploring new funding and encourage the construction of new affordable housing

Use code enforcement to encourage landlords to reduce lead hazards. Create Detroit housing ordinances to require city inspections for lead paint hazards and provide additional inspectors for the city to target lead hazards.

Create a database of lead-safe housing in Detroit. This database, which just began, could be available on the internet and through a toll-free number.

Test at least 50 percent of Detroit's children for lead poisoning. Currently about 33 percent are

don't look any further."

Nobody knows how many children are poisoned from playing in tainted soil -- putting dirty fingers and toys in their mouths, or eating lunch without washing their hands. Some research says children can tolerate just 6

micrograms of lead per day, an amount smaller than a grain of salt. But there is no clear science yet about how much dirt a child would have to ingest at various levels of contamination before being poisoned. The reason most contaminated sites are ignored is that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency tends to pursue cleanups only when a clear polluter can be identified and held accountable. At times, local development efforts also prompt cleanups because lenders, fearing liability, require it.

EPA officials say the reason for a limited number of cleanups is simple: money.

"If we got into cleaning all those urban lead areas, it would be phenomenal, the cost associated with it," said Mike Sanderson, Superfund division director for the EPA region overseeing Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri.

Many high lead readings

Detroit has a higher percentage of lead-poisoned children than the national average.

To see how much lead was in soil throughout metro Detroit, the Free Press commissioned a study by Howard Mielke, a

about 33 percent are tested.

Appoint a lead czar in Detroit to coordinate city departments, work with community groups, landlords, state officials and others to eliminate lead poisoning in the city by 2010.

More details can be found at www.detroitleadwsudata.org or by calling 313-961-4780, press 1, and leave a message anytime.

professor of environmental toxicology at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans. He has published extensive articles on lead contamination in soil.

Mielke and a research team collected 406 samples throughout Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. The team found that 41 samples had lead levels above 400 parts per million, the EPA's level of concern for children's play areas. An additional 132 showed more than 140 ppm, the guideline Canada sets for residential areas.

In general, most of the areas with high lead levels were in Detroit, with the amount of lead in the soil decreasing farther from the city.

For example, they found a lead level of 9 ppm on a piece of property along a residential street near 22 Mile and Hayes in Macomb Township. A piece of property along a street in northwest Detroit, near Wildemere and Midland, showed a level of 189 ppm. And a spot north of downtown Detroit, at Beaubien and Erskine, had 752 ppm -- nearly double the EPA guideline for children's play areas. This area is surrounded by elegant brick homes, vacant lots and the Brewster Homes, a public housing complex.

Lead occurs naturally in the soil, usually at levels below 50 ppm. In Michigan, a 1995 report to Gov. John Engler from the lead panel of the Michigan Environmental Science Board cited a state survey that found levels generally between 2.5 and 55 ppm.

But in the Free Press survey, many sites had much higher levels.

One sample from a Rochester Hills neighborhood of spacious brick colonials near Tienken and Brewster roads tested at 810 ppm.

Far more typical of outer suburbs, however,

was a sample taken in Ken and Lori Ann Karam's subdivision near Brewster and Walton in Rochester Hills. Tests showed 4 ppm in the neighborhood of tudors and brick colonials, built in the 1980s. The results were among the lowest found.

The Karams have two children -- Christopher, 4, and Patrick, 2 months -- and were relieved by the news.

"When you have small children, you are concerned about these things," said Lori Ann Karam, 32. "One of the reasons we were not interested in an old house was because of the lead in the paint."

The news was not as good elsewhere. On a residential street south of 9 Mile off Warner in Warren, a lead soil reading came back at 398 ppm -- two points shy of the level the federal government says can be harmful for children.

Renee Kazmirowski, 35, lives in the neighborhood of tidy red brick ranches. She said she and her husband, Tom, never gave lead poisoning a thought.

"I'm a little surprised, a little worried," said Kazmirowski, who has an 11-year-old daughter, Erin, and 2-year-old son, Tommy. Kazmirowski said Tommy has never been tested for lead poisoning. But now it is something she plans to bring up with her son's pediatrician. Several samples taken in Pontiac showed some of the highest readings in Oakland County. One sample near Jefferson and Euclid revealed 495 ppm. Another sample, taken from along Saginaw Street near Lewis, had a reading of 390 ppm.

Lynette Zaroni, 33, who lives near where the sample was taken, said she wasn't surprised to hear of the high level. A foundry used to operate about a quarter-mile from her house. A dark, smelly soot used to spew out of the stacks, covering the surrounding ground, she said.

She said she suspects the foundry, which closed about a dozen years ago, polluted the neighborhood.

Many researchers, including Mielke, attribute much of the high lead levels in soil to decades of leaded gasoline use. Lead was in automobile gasoline until 1986.

In the late 1970s, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey found 88.2 percent of all American children between ages 1 and 5 had a blood-lead level greater than 10 micrograms per deciliter, the level considered by the government to be a safety concern. When a new version of the study was done in the early 1990s, the percentage of children in that danger range had dropped to 4.4 percent. Much of the decline was attributed to the elimination of leaded gas.

When lead was in gasoline, it literally spewed from cars in a fine particle mist. When the mist hit a building, the particles slid to the ground and collected at the foundation, Mielke said. This explains why the soil at the foundation of many brick buildings has high lead levels, he said, even if the buildings had no lead paint.

Mielke has studied traffic patterns in New Orleans and Thibodaux, a small older city near it, and discovered that intersections with 100,000 cars passing through them daily had about 10 times as much lead in the soil as intersections with about 10,000 cars passing through. Traffic volumes, he said, help explain why smaller, old cities have less lead in the soil than old, larger ones.

In Michigan, cars and trucks emitted about 182,000 metric tons of lead between 1950 and 1984, Mielke said. Lead is heavy and doesn't evaporate. So it remains long after it was deposited.

Lead also came from industrial sources. In

2000, for instance, Michigan companies released 24,345 pounds of lead and lead compounds in the air, according to the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory. That was the most recent year numbers were available.

Between 1996 and 2000, the New Haven Foundry in northern Macomb County ranked first or second on the list. The foundry in downtown New Haven released 52,872 pounds of lead in that time, the EPA reports show. It closed and filed for bankruptcy in 2001.

Bernardo Sia, senior environmental engineer with the DEQ's air quality division, said the foundry broke no laws. As an older facility, it had no lead-release limits, he said.

Conflicts over guidelines

Most money to fight lead poisoning today is directed at removing lead paint in housing. One reason is that researchers don't all believe high amounts of lead in soil significantly contribute to high blood-lead levels in children.

A report commissioned by the EPA, called "A Three-City Lead Study," found that reducing lead in soil shrank blood-lead levels in some children, but not always in a statistically significant amount.

In 1992, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, after reviewing a variety of studies, issued a report showing some scientists found anything above 100 ppm of lead in soil could be unsafe. Others found anything above 1,000 ppm might be of concern.

"There's no one number all the studies pointed to," said Lynn Goldman, a professor in environmental health sciences at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore. "If anybody tells you differently, they're saying that because

that is their political point of view."

Goldman worked at the EPA during the Clinton administration and led the division that set the 400 ppm soil guideline for children. The guideline said anything above 1,200 ppm overall in a yard is of concern, but the levels should be no higher than 400 ppm in areas where children play. The guideline became effective after being published in the Federal Register two years ago, nine years after Congress passed a law asking the agency to create a guideline.

One reason for the delay was the absence of clear scientific data, said Dave Topping, an environmental scientist for the EPA's National Program Chemicals Division.

Besides the variety of recommendations by researchers, it is also difficult to calculate how much lead children are exposed to when they play, Topping said. Some children may literally eat dirt; others may not want to get dirty. Also complicating the equation is how soil lead levels fit with other lead exposures for children, he said.

For instance, a child in a city where the water system has lead pipes or lead solder may drink lead. A child in a home with lead paint or lead dust may eat lead. Lead can be in the air some children breathe, in canned food imported from other countries or in ceramics or leaded crystal.

Topping said those multiple factors have contributed to scientists being unable to agree on a single safe number for lead contamination in soil. Another issue is how lead reacts in soil. If a child eats a lead paint chip, the child ingests a highly concentrated dose of lead. Lead in soil binds itself to dirt particles, making it less dangerous when it is ingested, some scientists say.

"Lead in soil has not led to as much exposure of people as was initially

suspected," said Valerie Thomas, a research scientist at Princeton University's Environmental Institute. "It gets more and more bound to soil particles, which means even if you eat it, you don't absorb it as much. Because we have so much lead in our houses, it makes sense to work on getting lead out of the houses, or tearing down the houses."

But Johnson, the professor at State University of New York, said that doesn't mean lead in the soil should be discounted. Johnson recently concluded research that found a strong connection between high lead levels in children's blood and their exposure to high lead levels in soil. His work, and that of others, also traces a rise in children's blood-lead levels during the summer and a decrease in the winter.

Some researchers tie this to the role sunlight plays on a child's metabolism. The theory is sunlight draws lead out of a child's bones, where it is stored, and puts it back into the bloodstream.

But other researchers believe the connection is from children playing outside in the summer in lead-contaminated dirt. The extra lead exposure then increases their blood lead levels.

"Pretty quickly, you can convince yourself the amount of lead in the soil from using gasoline for 50 years is maybe just as important an exposure source as the lead in an old house," Johnson said of this research.

Mielke conducted a 1996 study of the amount of lead on children's hands at day-care centers in New Orleans. By wiping the children's hands before sending them off to play, then wiping them after they returned, he found that children generally had 4 microgramson each hand after playing inside, but had 28 microgramson each hand after playing outside.

When children get lead on their hands, it gets on their toys and into their mouths, Mielke said. He found a direct relationship between the amount of lead in soil and the amount on children's hands.

Determining cleanup money

The federal government's method for determining which sites should be cleaned depends largely on the land's use.

If a lead smelter or some other industrial source can be blamed for contaminating an area, the site can qualify for millions of federal cleanup dollars.

That happened in Eureka, Utah, where the Chief Consolidated Mining Co. caused lead contamination.

Bert Garcia, a supervisor in the EPA's regional office for Utah and South Dakota, said the agency is spending \$51 million in Superfund money to clean soil after high levels of lead were found. Children who played outside were being lead poisoned.

The EPA is trying to reduce lead contamination in the area to about 230 ppm. The agency also required the mining operation to help pay for the cleanup.

Soil with similar lead contamination can be found throughout metro Detroit. But the EPA has too few resources to clean up so many sites and must focus on the worst problems, said Bill Muno, director of the Superfund division of the EPA's regional office in Chicago.

The EPA estimated in January 2001 that 12 million U.S. homes have lead soil levels exceeding 400 ppm.

EPA Superfund money targets industrial pollution that may include extremely high amounts of lead in soil. Other EPA programs target lead paint in homes, because the EPA generally considers lead

paint to pose greater risks than lead in soil.

"You have to use available resources toward the biggest risk first," Muno said.
"You can get all worked up about lead in soil -- and you may do something about that -- but it may not have that big of an effect on the kids in the home, because the lead in the paint may be 90 percent of the problem while the lead in the soil is 10 percent."

But Donele Wilkins, executive director of Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice, an advocacy group, said underestimating the impact of lead in soil is a problem. Wilkins said she believes soil contamination contributes to the high numbers of children with elevated blood lead levels in Detroit.

"We believe there is a lot of good work being done looking at household contamination with lead paint, but not enough with looking at the outside issue of lead in the environment," Wilkins said. "We believe this is one of the reasons there are such elevated levels of lead poisoning, disproportionately so, among our children."

Incinerator's role in question

In Detroit, the Free Press found some of its highest lead readings in a neighborhood on Klein Street near Conant. Tests showed 751 ppm.

"That is a shock," said Kirk Lompart, 52, who lives in a home on Klein that was once owned by his grandparents.

He said a foundry once operated down the street. He recalled that charcoal-colored soot covered the ground on some mornings when he was a boy. He said his grandmother had a garden in the backyard, and no one worried then about issues like lead.

In another Detroit neighborhood -- just east

of the Greater Detroit Resource Recovery Facility, an incinerator -- soil tests showed high lead levels along three streets: 604 ppm on Dubois, 532 ppm on Jos. Campau and 695 ppm on Medbury.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality reports show that the incinerator released 396 pounds of lead in the air between 1998 and 2001. The ZIP code surrounding the incinerator had the highest percentage of Detroit children who were tested and diagnosed with high lead levels, according to a 2001 report by the Harvard School of Public Health.

Some environmentalists, including Ed McArdle, conservation committee cochair with the Southeast Michigan Sierra Club, worry that the amount of lead released into the air by the incinerator may be on the rise because more lead is thrown into the trash. A recent national report by the EPA concluded that an increasing quantity of electronic items are being discarded as waste. Many of those items contain lead. The Detroit incinerator is the largest municipal incinerator in the country, according to Brad van Guilder, a Wayne County organizer for the Ecology Center, an environmental group in Ann Arbor. The incinerator is seeking to renew its operating permit, which is expected to be approved sometime this year.

Once a year, the incinerator hires a company and sets a date for the company to test the amount of lead emitted from its smokestack. The Michigan DEQ approves and observes the testing.

Remilando Pinga, senior environmental engineer in the DEQ's air quality division, said the incinerator has never released more lead than allowed.

Mike Brinker, director of the incinerator, said it is impossible to link the readings found by the Free Press to the incinerator. The neighborhood, Brinker said, is near

major freeways. He also said Detroit is an industrial city where major industries have operated for a century.

"It is certainly not that simple," Brinker said of linking the incinerator to the soil readings. "A soil sample at a point in time tells you what it is. It doesn't tell you when it got there or how it got there."

Contact WENDY WENDLAND-BOWYER at 313-223-4792 or wendland@freepress.com. Free Press staff writer Tina Lam contributed to this report.

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Mick Hans

01/27/2003 08:57 AM

To: Mick Hans/R5/USEPA/US@EPA
Subject: 1-27-03 Freep/Master Metals 

**LEAD'S TOXIC TOLL:
Report prompts action on
smelter**

**U.S. agency to test Detroit site,
neighborhood**

January 27, 2003

BY TINA LAM
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency plans to do more testing at the old Master Metals lead smelter site in Detroit and in the nearby neighborhood, the top official in the agency's Chicago office said.

"We're committed to doing whatever it takes to make sure this site is cleaned up and to determine if it has affected neighboring areas," said Thomas Skinner, EPA administrator for Michigan and five other states in the Midwest.

"We will do added testing at the site to make sure the cleanup is adequate, and we'll work with other agencies -- including health agencies in the area -- in order to better scope out what the situation is in the neighborhoods," Skinner said late Friday. "We're going to do some added monitoring beyond the boundaries of the site itself in order to determine what the levels of lead are."

Skinner said the EPA is acting in response to findings of a seven-month Free Press investigation published last week about long-ignored lead hazards in the smelter neighborhood. "You guys have done some very comprehensive work, and we want to take that and use it to see how we can . . . be more effective than we have been," Skinner said.

On Wednesday, the Free Press reported that the Master Metals smelter, located in Detroit on Nevada near Ryan, spewed toxic lead dust on an east-side neighborhood for two decades. At times, as much as 2 pounds of lead per hour blew out of the plant's smokestack. The plant closed in 1984. The smelter property received an initial cleanup, but regulators largely overlooked the neighborhood.

In 1998, the EPA ignored its own experts' concerns about contamination in the neighborhood. It removed just seven soil samples and concluded no cleanup was needed.

The Free Press found that the EPA has done a much more thorough job of assessing neighborhoods near smelters in other parts of the country, taking hundreds or thousands of soil samples from as far as 20 miles away from the plants.

A soil expert the Free Press hired took 97 soil samples within 1.8 miles of the smelter and found 10 hot spots, areas with more than 400 parts per million of lead. That's the EPA's level of concern for areas where children play. Four of those spots had more than 1,000 ppm -- one of them had a lead level of 5,811 ppm.

"Something has to be done," said Dana Hall, a nurse who works for the Red Cross. Hall lived in the Sojourner Truth housing project across from the smelter from 1967 to 1998 and raised four children and a granddaughter there.

Two of Hall's sons, now in their 30s, were lead poisoned as children and were in special-education classes in high school. Her 13-year-old granddaughter has a learning disability. Hall no longer lives in Sojourner Truth, but said she's worried about children in the neighborhood.

About 70,000 people, including 5,600 children, live within 2 miles of the smelter. Yet in 2001, the EPA notified only 30 people that the old smelter site was being cleaned up again -- two years after the initial cleanup ended in 1999. No public meetings were ever held.

Skinner defended the agency's failure to notify more neighbors, saying that the initial site cleanup involved an emergency removal of dangerous substances. "It was an imminent danger, and we had to get the contamination out of there," he said.

But Skinner said he expects there will be more public outreach now.

The EPA's first step will be to secure the old smelter property, which still has two buildings that haven't been torn down and are accessible through broken windows. Although the windows have at times been boarded up, the Free Press found the

boards gone last summer and again in December. The property remains dangerously contaminated. Even after an initial cleanup in 1999, it still has lead levels as high as 67,800 ppm, records show.

After securing the site, Skinner said the EPA plans to consult with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Detroit and state health departments and Detroit's environmental affairs department. He said there is no timetable yet for when testing will begin in the neighborhood. "Over the course of time, we'll do that in conjunction with the state and local agencies," he said.

Contact TINA LAM at 313-223-4407 or lam@freepress.com.



Elissa
Speizman/R5/USEPA
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02/03/2003 10:38 AM

To: Margaret Guerriero, Jason El-Zein, RALPH DOLLHOPF, William Muno, I
Subject: Detroit Free Press story and a question: Who should take the lead
in contacting Kwame Kenyatta?

We need to get him on board with the multi-agency task force and see if the joint plans can address his desire for a public meeting. Who should do that?

http://www.freep.com/news/locway/smelt3_20030203.htm

Action sought on polluted Detroit smelter site

County official seeks input, accountability

February 3, 2003

BY TINA LAM
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

People who grew up near the abandoned former Master Metals plant on Detroit's east side say they want more answers and more action from government officials on the polluted smelter. And at least one official, Wayne County Commissioner Kwame Kenyatta, said he plans to demand more action.

"I'm totally dismayed by the nonconcern for children's lives," said Alta Wheatley, who grew up, along with eight siblings, a few blocks from the smelter. Wheatley was born in 1955, the year the plant began pumping out lead dust.

"Every day we had this black stuff lying everywhere and didn't know what it was," she said. "In the '50s, lead wasn't a priority. But the objective is to make things better for the next generation."

Tywler Leonard, 48, of Detroit grew up at Sojourner Truth, a housing project across the street from the smelter. Cars and laundry hanging on clotheslines would get dusty from the plant's fallout. "We wore clothes with lead particles on them," he said.

His father, now dead, worked at Master Metals from 1966 until the early 1980s, when the last owners went bankrupt. He was never tested for lead poisoning, but said he has been a slow learner all his life and was in special education classes. Now, he suffers from joint ailments.

"Everybody who stayed in that neighborhood is owed something for what we were exposed to," he said. "For the state to allow them to do that should have been against the law."

Last month, the Free Press reported that the Master Metals smelter, on Nevada near Ryan, spewed toxic lead dust in the area for two decades. At times, nearly two pounds of lead an hour blew out of the plant's smokestack, 24 hours a day.

In 1998, the Environmental Protection Agency began a 10-month cleanup of the property -- which had been abandoned since 1984 -- but didn't tell anyone in the neighborhood until the end of 2001, long after the initial cleanup ended. The cleanup is not finished.

Based on just seven samples taken nearby, the EPA said no neighborhood cleanup was needed. About 70,000 people live within 2 miles of the former smelter, including 5,600 children. The Sojourner Truth housing

project is directly across the street, and Atkinson Elementary School is a few blocks away.

Following the Free Press report, the EPA said last month it would take another look, along with other state and local agencies. "There are some things moving forward," said Mick Hans, spokesman for the EPA's Chicago office, on Thursday. "We are talking with lots of people."

County Commissioner Kenyatta said he wants to make sure officials do more than talk.

Kenyatta said last week he plans to push for more testing and a cleanup of the neighborhood surrounding the smelter. Kenyatta said he has set up a lead poisoning subcommittee of the commission's health and human services committee, which he chairs. The committee will hold its first meeting Feb. 12 and will focus on the Master Metals site.

Kenyatta said he plans a public hearing in the neighborhood in March or April so residents can air their concerns and hear from city, county, EPA and company officials. "All of this costs money," he said. "But much of this cleanup needs to fall on the back of the private enterprise that was participating in these smelters."

A former plant worker said he and others were tested for lead poisoning by a nurse at the plant but never knew the results.

"I was appalled to see this plant in the inner city, right near where people lived, when I first moved here," said Arthur Johnson, who worked at the plant for more than three years in the early 1970s. "When I would leave in the morning after the night shift, I would see this dark cloud hanging over the neighborhood."

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To: Thomas Skinner, Bharat Mathur, William Muno, David Ullrich, Steffani
Subject: Two stories on EPA Master Metals order

02/07/2003 08:29 AM

http://www.freep.com/news/childrenfirst/smelt7_20030207.htm

Detroit Free Press

U.S. loses patience on smelter cleanup

11 Detroit firms told: Do it now, or pay in triple

February 7, 2003

BY TINA LAM
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday that it has ordered 11 companies to do a final cleanup at a former lead smelter on Detroit's east side or face triple the costs of having the EPA do it.

The EPA said it was forced to act because the companies hadn't taken any steps to complete the cleanup since the agency sought it last July.

On Wednesday, the EPA issued a cleanup order and described the Master Metals site as "an imminent and substantial threat to public health and the environment."

Tom Skinner, administrator for the EPA region encompassing Michigan, said in a statement Thursday: "Our patience with the responsible parties is at an end. Area residents deserve to have the site cleaned up quickly."

Among the companies required to clean up the site are Detroit's automakers, Houston-based NL Industries Inc. and Allied Signal, now owned by Honeywell Corp. NL Industries and Allied Signal each owned the plant at one time.

Ford Motor Co., General Motors Corp. and the former Chrysler Corp. sent batteries there to reclaim lead in them.

NL Industries said no company officials were available to discuss the plant. But the EPA said the company has requested a meeting with the agency next week.

A Honeywell spokesman said the company had not seen the EPA's order.

Kathleen Graham, a DaimlerChrysler Corp. spokeswoman, said the order was welcome. "Chrysler Group has, along with other parties, been cooperating with the EPA in a timely manner," she said, "and we hope that this order will bring about the involvement of some recalcitrant parties so the cleanup can move forward."

Representatives from the other automakers were unavailable.

The smelter operated between 1955 and 1983. The 1.8-acre site has been abandoned since 1989.

The Free Press highlighted the smelter last month as part of a five-day series on lead contamination in metro Detroit. The EPA discovered heavy lead contamination at the site in 1996 and ordered six companies to do

an initial emergency cleanup in 1998 and 1999.

Parts of the old smelter were demolished, and 1,690 cubic yards of leaded soil was treated and taken to landfills over a 10-month period. Despite that cleanup, the site still has spots with as much as 67,000 parts per million of lead, or 56 times what is allowed at an industrial site.

The first phase of the cleanup cost the companies \$400,000, less than the \$700,000 the EPA had estimated it would cost. The estimate for the final phase is \$878,000. The work should start by April, whether the companies or the EPA does the work, said Jason El-Zein, a chief of the agency's emergency response branch in Grosse Ile.

If the EPA does the work, it will seek to recoup the costs in court. The agency would ask for three times the cleanup costs.

The cleanup will be more thorough than the EPA originally planned, said Jan Carlson, an attorney for the EPA in Chicago. Instead of putting a concrete cap on parts of the site and requiring that it be monitored and maintained for 30 years, the new plan requires the complete removal of any lead-tainted soil above 900 parts per million, which is the state's standard for an industrial site. The state now owns the site.

The smelter rained lead particles on the nearby neighborhood for at least two decades. Residential areas where children play shouldn't have more than 400 ppm of lead in the soil, according to EPA guidelines.

http://www.mlive.com/newsflash/regional/index.ssf?/newsflash/get_story.ssf?/cgi-free/getstory_ssf.cgi?g9929_BC_MI--SmelterFallout&&news&newsflash-michigan

AP Story found on:

Mlive.com

Wichita Eagle (Kansas)

Miami Herald (Florida)

Kansas City Star (Missouri)

EPA orders 11 companies to clean site or pay for work

The Associated Press

2/7/03 6:40 AM

DETROIT (AP) -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has ordered the Big Three automakers and eight other companies to clean up toxic lead residue from a former smelter or foot the bill for a federal cleanup.

The EPA said Thursday that it was forced to act because the companies failed to complete a cleanup that the agency requested in July.

On Wednesday, the EPA issued a cleanup order and described the Master Metals site as "an imminent and substantial threat to public health and the environment."

"Our patience with the responsible parties is at an end. Area residents deserve to have the site cleaned up quickly," the Detroit Free Press quoted regional EPA administrator Tom Skinner as saying.

General Motors Corp., Ford Motor Co., DaimlerChrysler AG are among those ordered to carry out the cleanup. Others include two of the smelter's former owners, Houston-based NL Industries Inc. and Allied Signal, now owned by Honeywell Corp.

The automakers sent batteries there to reclaim lead in them.

NL Industries and Honeywell declined comment on the order.

DaimlerChrysler spokeswoman Kathleen Graham said the order was welcome.

"Chrysler Group has, along with other parties, been cooperating with the EPA in a timely manner, and we hope that this order will bring about the involvement of some recalcitrant parties so the cleanup can move forward," she said.

The smelter operated from 1955 to 1983. The 1.8-acre site has been abandoned since 1989. It spewed up to 2 pounds of toxic lead each hour from its 105-foot-high smokestack.

On the Net:

Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov>



Elissa
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To: Thomas Skinner, Bharat Mathur, David Ullrich, William Muno, Margare
Subject: Freep story on Master Metals

02/12/2003 08:40 AM

http://www.freep.com/news/childrenfirst/lead12_20030212.htm

Detroit Free Press

Lead sampling planned near smelter site

U.S. will ask to test some Detroit yards

February 12, 2003

BY TINA LAM
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Residents who live near a long-abandoned lead smelter on Detroit's east side will soon have scientists knocking on their doors, seeking permission to sample their yards for lead.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency said Tuesday it will take about 40 samples from yards within a mile of the former Master Metals smelter, beginning in early March. Using wind patterns as a guide, the agency will collect samples where lead dust might have landed.

Mick Hans, a spokesman for the EPA's regional office in Chicago, said Tuesday that additional testing could follow, depending on results from the initial samples.

The EPA plans to set up a storefront office in the Krainzwood neighborhood, with staff on hand to answer questions for residents. The agency also plans to hold meetings with small neighborhood groups before hosting a public meeting in April, Hans said.

"This is something we do periodically in a neighborhood when we're going to have a presence there," he said.

Officials from the EPA and half a dozen state and local government agencies met Monday to discuss what to do about the smelter.

Last month, the Free Press found problems with the cleanup of the Master Metals smelter as part of a five-day series on lead poisoning in metro Detroit. The Free Press found that a cleanup of the contaminated smelter property began in fall 1998 but was never finished. The EPA decided no cleanup of the surrounding neighborhood was necessary -- a decision that was based on seven soil samples tested there. In other cities, the EPA has taken hundreds or even thousands of samples in neighborhoods near smelters.

The EPA had not notified residents of the risks from the heavily contaminated property when the cleanup began. About 30 households were notified more than three years afterward.

The Free Press hired a soil expert who took 97 soil samples as far as 1.8 miles from the smelter and found "hot spots" in which lead levels were higher than the EPA allows in residential areas where children play. The lead could have come from paint, gasoline or the smelter.

The EPA plans to collect samples based on models of the emissions plume from the smelter, Hans said.

EPA documents show that the prevailing winds blew toward the neighborhood north of the smelter on East Nevada.

A Wayne County commissioner said Tuesday he's concerned that there was little discussion at the EPA's meeting Monday about more testing of children in the area to determine whether they have lead poisoning.

"That needs to be done," said Commissioner Kwame Kenyatta, who will chair the first meeting today of a county subcommittee on lead. "We also want to see a cleanup in those neighborhoods."

Hans said state and local agencies would be responsible for health screenings; the EPA's role is mostly in cleanup.

Last week, EPA officials said they had ordered 11 companies to finish the property cleanup or face triple the cost of any cleanup done by the EPA. The companies had been given an Oct. 18 deadline to come up with a final plan but did not do so, Hans said.

Among the companies responsible for the cleanup are former plant owners NL Industries, based in Houston, and Allied Signal, which is now merged with Honeywell International. In addition, Ford Motor Co., General Motors Corp. and the Chrysler Group of DaimlerChrysler must help. The automakers sent batteries to the smelter for recycling.

Last week, the Detroit City Council passed a resolution that will be sent to each of the 11 companies urging them to comply immediately with the cleanup order, said Councilwoman Sheila Cockrel, who sponsored the resolution.

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To: Thomas Skinner, Bharat Mathur, David Ullrich, William Muno, Margare
Subject: Free Press story on Master Metals sampling

03/04/2003 12:20 PM

http://www.freep.com/news/locway/epa4_20030304.htm

Detroit Free Press

U.S. agency collects soil near old smelter

Tests to determine lead levels in area

March 4, 2003

BY WENDY WENDLAND-BOWYER
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The federal Environmental Protection Agency began collecting soil samples Monday from 74 spots near an abandoned smelter on Detroit's east side to see whether neighboring yards harbor dangerously high amounts of lead.

The EPA plans to collect the samples within a 2-mile radius of the old Master Metals property on East Nevada. The testing will follow wind patterns to determine whether toxic smoke from the smelter blew into the neighborhood, settling into yards and around houses.

The EPA expects to be finished by Friday. The soil will be analyzed for lead, mercury, cadmium and a handful of other metals, said James Justice, an on-scene coordinator for the EPA's Superfund emergency response branch.

Home owners who gave the EPA permission to sample their soil will get results for their property. The EPA also plans to share results publicly at a community meeting in early April.

"We don't know what's in the neighborhood," said Jon Gulch, who also is an on-scene coordinator for the Superfund emergency response branch. "This sampling will tell us what we'll do next."

Last month as part of a 5-day series on lead poisoning, the Free Press reported that the cleanup of the Master Metals smelter, which began in fall 1998, was never finished. The EPA decided no cleanup of the surrounding neighborhood was necessary -- a decision based on results of seven soil samples. In other cities, the EPA has taken hundreds, even thousands, of samples in neighborhoods near smelters.

At a meeting with block club presidents and community leaders last week, the EPA apologized for not taking more tests in the Detroit neighborhood. Many longtime residents were visibly upset.

"My concern is, why did this take so long?" said James Gaye, 73, who, along with his wife, Jennie, has lived in the area for 41 years. Gaye and his wife sat in the front row and audiotaped the meeting. "The only way we even found out about this is through the newspaper. That doesn't make any sense to me. . . . Someone was not doing their job."

The Master Metals site operated from 1955 until the early 1980s. The smelter took in batteries and removed the lead from them. At times, as much as 2 pounds of lead every hour spewed from its smokestack.

The EPA now has opened an office in the area for residents to come in with questions. The agency is planning to mail information on the project to more than 2,000 people who live in the area. The Michigan Department of Community Health is planning to knock down the long-abandoned Masters Metals building using Clean Michigan Initiative funds.

The EPA has ordered 11 companies that once did business there to finish paying for the cleanup, which includes removing the cement over much of the site, testing the soil and removing and replacing any soil that has dangerously high lead levels.

The EPA workers will don protective gear, including respirators, when they work on the Master Metals property. The groups doing the neighborhood soil testing will wear blue jumpsuits.

Irma Jaxon is a longtime resident who once lived in Sojourner Truth, the public housing complex across the street from the smelter. She now is the president of a neighborhood block club and said she is glad to see something being done.

"It sounds good," she said. "But we'll have to see it through."

The EPA has set up an office for neighborhood questions at 17825 Ryan Road. Call 313-368-2871 and leave a message anytime.

Read the Free Press' lead series at www.freep.com/lead/index.htm

Contact WENDY WENDLAND-BOWYER at 313-223-4792 or wendland@freepress.com.

LEAD'S TOXIC TOLL:

Potential of danger at 16
sites brings little action

Detroit list gets scant response
from officials

April 7, 2003

BY TINA LAM AND WENDY
WENDLAND-BOWYER
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Wild dogs roam on the sliver of land on Detroit's east side. So do pheasants and rats. Children sometimes cut through, stepping over the bent barbed-wire fence. Scavengers come, too, hauling away brick after brick, leaving gaping holes in the old factory's walls.

For decades these once-proud buildings were part of the now-bankrupt Federal-Mogul Corp. Workers came by the hundreds to build lead engine bearings. The smokestack from the former lead foundry still towers above homes a few feet away on Fairview Street.

Yet to officials charged with enforcing environmental safety laws, it's as if the place doesn't exist.

An environmental scientist investigating lead contamination nationwide included the site on a list of potentially harmful former lead smelters, foundries and alloy makers in Detroit. When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sent the Detroit section of the list to city and state agencies last year, the Federal-Mogul site was inexplicably left off.

Officials have done little to investigate any of the sites. They haven't even been able to find some of them.

In the past month, the Free Press did locate

and document at least some of the history of each site by examining property records, company documents, oldfire insurance maps, city directories and state environmental records. The newspaper also interviewed current and past property owners, and discovered that smelting and foundry work did occur at most of the sites, some of which are close to homes.

Because lead stays in soil and can be blown by wind or rain, danger could lurk in the ground for decades, potentially affecting the health of people who live nearby. Lead is especially harmful to children under age 6, curbing brain development and affecting the central nervous system.

"Funding and resources are always an issue," said Jason El-Zein, chief of the EPA's emergency response branch on Grosse Ile. "We can't tackle everything at once."

The EPA and City of Detroit each have sent inspectors to drive by the sites and are trying to find records on them. The state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is studying them. But all three have had the list for about a year and have done little. Wayne County just learned of the sites two months ago and is also seeking information. A spokesman said the city began testing soil at the Federal-Mogul site in mid-March but no results were available.

After the Free Press reported in January that a cleanup of the former Master Metals lead smelter on Detroit's east side was incomplete, the EPA began pressuring 11 companies to finish the job. The EPA also is conducting soil tests at homes near Master Metals, where a Free Press expert found some high lead levels.

Yet from the new list of 16 smelter sites, just one -- the Detroit Lead Co. property on Helen Avenue on the city's east side -- has been

extensively tested in the past year. Massive lead contamination was found, comparable to that at Master Metals. Still, no cleanup has started. No neighborhood tests have been ordered. And nobody knows whether the other sites could be just as dangerous.

"The potential for these sites is for them to be every bit as bad as Master Metals," said Bill Eckel, the scientist who compiled the list and who now works for the EPA in Virginia. "You won't know until someone investigates them."

Sketchy records, memories

The 16 Detroit sites are part of a list of 400 largely forgotten oldlead smelters, foundries and metal processing plants around the countrythat Eckel published in 2001. Eckel was working for a union investigating a smelting company when he discovered that the company had several old plants it hadn't reported to government agencies.

One was a lead battery recycling site in Anderson, Ind. That site, in the middle of a residential and commercial neighborhood where children played, turned out to be heavily contaminated with lead. It is now being cleaned up.

Eckel found a similar site once owned by the same company in Los Angeles, also now being cleaned up. "I thought, if we can find two sites this bad this easily, what about the rest of the industry?" he said.

He searched industry directories from the 1930s through the 1960s and found 600 sites where lead was smelted or processed. Cross-checking that against the EPA's hazardous site registry, he found 400 that weren't on any EPA list.

Since Eckel's list was published, many governments have looked into the sites, but

Eckel said he doesn't know if any other cleanups have resulted.

"I think mostly they've been put in the queue to be evaluated when someone gets around to it," he said. "Most governments have sites they're already dealing with, and there's not a great deal of money to be spent." The DEQ and the City of Detroit got Eckel's list from the EPA last year. Detroit officials did a cursory survey of each, driving by and checking tax records. But the city said it couldn't find several sites and mistakenly listed at least one in the wrong place. Two sites on Eckel's list, including the Federal-Mogul factory, never made it to the city's list, although no one can say why.

"Maybe somebody who was typing it made a mistake," said the EPA's El-Zein.

Tracing property use back decades is difficult. Streets may no longer exist. Records may be sketchy.

Until the late 1970s, there was little environmental regulation of lead processors, and most operated without pollution controls. Heating lead, especially without controls, sends fine lead particles into the air that can be carried off.

While some of the 16 Detroit sites are near homes, others are in industrial areas, posing little risk to children -- though the ground could be heavily contaminated. Some are paved over, like the one now under Ford Field. Another is likely under I-75. While these aren't likely to pose a threat, they could have tainted surrounding areas.

Some current or past owners did not return calls. Many of those who did said they knew little about the history of the site, or denied that the processes they used could harm anyone.

"We didn't have furnaces," said the former owner of Detroit Lead Pipe Works on Lyndon, though Wayne County records show the firm was cited in 1991 for operating furnaces without a permit.

A spokesman for ASARCO, a company that has long owned lead smelters, said a Russell Street site it owned from the 1930s through 1950s smelted aluminum, not lead. Property owners who know of environmental contamination are required by federal law to clean it up.

A number of large companies with sites on the list -- Pepsi Bottling Group, General Motors Corp., American Axle Co. and DTE Energy -- said they didn't know about previous lead operations on property they now own.

One site is a fenced grassy field now part of American Axle & Manufacturing headquarters at 1436 Holbrook, just east of I-75. American Axle spokeswoman Renee Rogers said her company, which moved there in 1994, knew nothing about a smelter, but was aware of a junkyard, gas station and other buildings formerly on the land.

"We tested everything we purchased," Rogers said. She declined to say how many soil tests were done, whether lead was tested for or, if it was, what the results were. "All I know is that we were in compliance with our zoning," she said.

Kelly McAndrew, spokeswoman for Pepsi Bottling Group, said when her company bought its site on Detroit's near east side in 1990, there was no sign of a smelter or metal refinery.

The Free Press found fire insurance maps for 1961 showing Aetna Smelter Co. on what is now part of the Pepsi land.

McAndrew said Pepsi's title search didn't go back further than the mid-1970s. The company paid for soil tests, which showed elevated lead and zinc levels in one spot. Further testing of the spot showed no problems, McAndrew said. She said she did not know what the soil readings were or how many tests were ordered.

A spokesman for DTE Energy, which in 1971 bought a site on Eckel's list, said he didn't know what was there previously or whether soil was tested. Now paved, the site is near the Jeffries public housing project.

A forbidden playground

"They need to tear that building down," said Clinton Franks, 43, of the hulking Federal-Mogul factory that overlooks his backyard. Franks and his wife, Veronica, live on Fairview. Franks forbids the five children who live in the house from going on the foundry property, which runs the length of the street behind each home.

Mollie Brown, 78, lives on the other side of the street. The view out her front window is the former factory and foundry. Brown and her late husband moved to the street 36 years ago when the factory was thriving. Brown said she never heard anything about lead being processed there. The plant closed in the early 1970s.

"It seemed like back in the day, everything could get by without anybody knowing it," Brown said.

Kimberly Welch, Federal-Mogul's vice president of corporation communication, said the engine bearings factory operated from 1922 to 1973 and had a lead foundry until 1955.

A tall brick tower that was part of the foundry

still stands on the 14.5-acre site. Welch said a foundry typically burns metals at a lower temperature than a smelter, making it less likely to spread airborne substances like lead.

But in Portsmouth, Va., a lead foundry contaminated the surrounding neighborhood. In 1986, the EPA found lead in waste and soil on and off the site, and in 1992, contaminated soil was removed from homes two blocks away. Officials eventually relocated the tenants of a housing project and demolished it, as well as the foundry.

Nobody is investigating the Federal-Mogul property. The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department has had the property since 1979, using it for about 10 years to store and maintain vehicles. It has been abandoned since then, said department spokesman George Ellenwood.

Claryce Gibbons-Allen, director of the city's Department of Transportation, said her department is considering using the property, so routine soil testing for metals and chemicals was requested.

Lead-laced soil, piles of slag

Of the 16 sites Eckel found in Detroit, only one is being investigated by state and federal officials. The state DEQ has spent two years examining the former lead smelter on Helen Avenue in a mostly industrial area about two blocks from homes.

Tests there have found lead levels as high as 160,000 parts per million. The EPA standard for lead on an industrial site calls for no more than 1,200 parts per million. Besides lead-laced soil, there are piles of loose slag, a by-product of processing that usually is heavily laden with lead.

As the Free Press found at the Master Metals site not far away, no attention has been paid so far to possible contamination in the surrounding area.

Detroit Lead Smelting & Refining Co. bought the property in 1955 and became Detroit Lead Co. in 1957, but no longer exists. Officials say there are conflicting records about whether smelting was done there or it was merely used for storage. State documents say: "The site was formerly the site of a lead smelting operation and lead and silver reclaiming operations."

The city demolished buildings there in 1990, and city records describe a brick lead-smelting building as one of them.

"We're trying to secure funding to clean it up," said the EPA's El-Zein. "If we determine it was a smelter, there would be testing in the residential area."

A full cleanup, including removing soil, would cost \$1.2 million, the DEQ estimates. El-Zein said no company has been found to pay, so the site could end up on the cash-strapped national Superfund cleanup list.

Finding the funds to clean properties is only one obstacle. In older cities like Detroit, the sheer number of potentially contaminated sites is huge. Years ago, many small businesses legally did metal plating, tool-and-die work and lead smelting, said Josephine Powell, Wayne County's deputy director of environment.

As times changed, those businesses closed or sold the land, often without any determination of what might be in the soil, Powell said.

Kent Murray, chair of the earth science and environmental programs at the University of

Michigan-Dearborn, has done extensive review of soil samples in southeast Michigan. He said surface lead levels in the central part of metroDetroit are 16 times what is naturally found in the groundthere.

"This is appalling neglect," said David Dempsey, executive director of the Michigan Environmental Council.

"I just don't think pollution threats to low-income and minority communities are taken as seriously as they should be. If there were this many sites in higher-income areas, they would have been dealt with."

Old Sites Forgotten, Ignored

April 7, 2003

1. Detroit Lead Co., 13535 Helen. This is the only site on the list of 16 former lead plants that the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Environmental Quality are investigating. It has high levels of lead contamination. State records show Detroit Lead Smelting & Refining, which later became Detroit Lead Co., opened a plant in 1955 that operated for more than 30 years. It's two blocks from a neighborhood.

2. Industrial Smelting Co., 19430 Mt. Elliott. Maps from 1978 show a smelter. The land currently is rented by Kath Chemicals Inc., a soap maker. Vice President Rita Holston said she knows nothing about a smelter. The former owner of the bankrupt Industrial Smelting did not return calls.

3. Detroit Lead Pipe Works, 7001 Lyndon. The building was built in 1941. It's not clear what work was done there. Wayne County issued violations in 1991 for operating lead furnaces without permits. Proper permits were issued later that year. A tire company now dumps old tires on the site. Homes are across the street.

4. Federal-Mogul Corp., 11031 Shoemaker. Federal-Mogul spokeswoman Kimberly Welch said a foundry operated in Detroit until 1955. A map from 1941 describes it as a lead foundry. The City of Detroit has owned the land since 1979 and did some soil testing in mid-March. Homes on Fairview back up to the now-abandoned plant.

5. Federated Metals Division of ASARCO, 11630 Russell. A 1950 insurance map shows a smelter. The company says it was for aluminum. The area is mostly industrial, but there is a neighborhood and a park a few blocks away.

6. Continental Metal Co., 11500 Russell. This plant has been operating for more than 50 years. Its 1947 incorporation records describes its business as "buying, selling,

smelting, refining and otherwise dealing in new and scrap metals." Owners didn't answer the door or return repeated calls.

7. Acme Metal Co., 1436 Holbrook St. Maps from the 1950s and '60s show a smelting furnace. American Axle & Manufacturing Inc. has owned the property since 1994. Spokeswoman Renee Rogers said the company is in compliance with zoning requirements.

8. Great Lakes Smelting Co., 1640 E. Euclid. Maps from the 1950s and early '60s show a scrap metal recycling plant east of the current Bing Steel Co. property. By 1977, the building had been torn down. Current owner Ryerson Tull Inc. bought the property in the early 1960s, said Terence Rogers, vice president of finance and treasurer. Rogers said his firm doesn't do smelting or refining and he doesn't know what kind of work was done there before.

9. Michigan Smelting & Refining Co., 7885 Joseph Campau. A city directory from 1928-29 shows a smelting and refining company. It is now the site of General Motors Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Center. GM spokesman Ben Ippolito said the company has no information about a smelter having been on the site.

10. Aetna Smelting & Refining Co., 1826 Illinois. Maps show the company had a smelter in Detroit from the late 1930s to the early '60s. This part of the street no longer exists. A Pepsi Bottling Group plant now sits on the property. Company spokeswoman Kelly McAndrew said Pepsi has owned the land since 1990 and has no record of a smelter.

11. Federal Alloys Corp., 924 Leland. Maps from the late 1930s to late '50s show a metal warehouse. Buildings in this area were torn down by early 1961 to clear the way for what became I-75. It's near several housing complexes just east of I-75.

12. Wolverine White Metal Co., 3421 Gibson. Maps from the 1950s and '60s show a solder manufacturer. John Austerberry, a

spokesman for DTE Energy, which now owns the land, said the area is fenced and paved. It's near a section of the Jeffries public housing complex, which opened in 1953 and is being redeveloped.

13. Industrial Smelting Co., 648 E. Columbia. A 1953 map shows a scrap metal smelting operation. A 1928-29 city directory shows a company called City Metals Refining Co. The address no longer exists, and the land is now under Ford Field. When the stadium was built, all of the soil in the area was dug up and removed.

14. Standard Metals Co., 1560 Franklin. Maps from the 1950s show a scrap metal processor connected to an auto and shipping business. A neighbor said the metal firm still owned it in the early 1970s. The property later became the Franklin Street Brewery, which the city acquired in 1999 for the now-defunct casino district.

15. City Metals Refining Co., 2945 Hubbard. Maps from the 1950s and '60s show a smelting furnace. The address also is listed in a 1953 city directory under smelters and refineries. Piston Automotive bought the site from GM in the mid-1990s. GM spokesman Ippolito said GM knew nothing about a former smelter or refinery and knows of no soil tests having been done. A Piston spokesman declined to comment.

16. Motex Metal Process Corp., 4473 W. Jefferson. The firm was listed in a 1946 metal industry directory as a lead alloy maker. A 1940 lease Motex signed with Detroit River Warehouse Inc., which owned the building at that time, described Motex's plans to use the structure "for the manufacture and warehousing of metal products." Knight Newspapers Inc., a forerunner of Knight Ridder Inc., which owns the Free Press, purchased the building in 1946. It was used to store newsprint. One of the current owners, Jim Saros, said his firm bought it from the newspaper company in the mid-1990s.

By Tina Lam and Wendy Wendland-Bowyer



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To: Thomas Skinner, Bharat Mathur, David Ullrich, William Muno, Margare
Subject: Free Press story on 4/9 lead smelter public meeting

04/10/2003 07:22 AM

http://www.freep.com/news/childrenfirst/epa10_20030410.htm

Detroit Free Press

Level of lead not high near smelter

But actual site remains unsafe, U.S. agency says

April 10, 2003

BY TINA LAM

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials told residents Wednesday that just five out of 70 soil samples they took up to two miles from the former Master Metals lead smelter on Detroit's east side showed elevated lead levels.

The highest level was about 840 parts per million, said Jason El-Zein, chief of the EPA's emergency response branch on Grosse Ile. The EPA considers 400 parts per million to be a level of concern.

El-Zein said the agency will take about 100 more samples from the yards of homes, Krainzwood Park and Atkinson Elementary School, starting the week of April 21. Those sites are within a quarter-mile of the old smelter at 4700 E. Nevada.

The agency also will do more extensive sampling at the five homes where elevated lead levels were found, El-Zein said.

He said the sampling program, which he hoped would be finished by June, is expected to cost the EPA about \$500,000.

"Once we finish the sampling, we'll go from there," El-Zein said.

But many of the 80 residents at Wednesday's meeting were skeptical about how and where the testing was done.

"I don't think they understand the emotion of this issue," said Teresa Lewis. "It doesn't help to be told that your property wasn't tested because you weren't on the line they drew."

The tests were done along two lines that form an "X" through the neighborhood.

The EPA has known for more than six years that the smelter site is heavily contaminated with lead. The agency ordered a cleanup in 1998 that has not been finished. Lead stays in soil and can be moved by wind or rain. It is especially harmful to children under 6, curbing brain development and affecting the central nervous system. Testing of yards within two miles of the smelter began in March, after a Free Press article in January criticized the lack of testing beyond the smelter property and the slow cleanup. Tests in the area by a Free Press soil expert, who took 97 samples, found that about 10 percent had elevated lead levels.

In other cities with smelters, the EPA has taken hundreds, even

thousands, of samples in neighborhoods near smelters. In Detroit, the agency concluded based on seven samples taken a few blocks from the smelter in 1998 that no further testing or off-site cleanup were needed.

Within days after the Free Press published its report about the failed cleanup, the EPA ordered 11 companies to finish the job or face triple damages. El-Zein said cleanup is expected to begin before the end of April.

Master Metals operated for two decades as a lead smelter, most of that time running 24 hours a day.

In 1971, Wayne County regulators tested the air and found the plant was putting out nearly 2 pounds of lead dust per hour from its smokestack. At the time, there were no limits on the amount of lead that a plant could emit.

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Subject: Free Press story on Master Metals lead sampling results

06/12/2003 08:31 AM

http://www.freep.com/news/locway/lead12_20030612.htm

Detroit Free Press

Soil that has lead will be replaced

BY WENDY WENDLAND-BOWYER
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

June 12, 2003

Seventy-one home owners who live within a quarter-mile of the former Master Metals lead smelter on Detroit's east side will see the soil in their yards replaced after tests discovered dangerously high lead levels.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently collected 557 soil samples from 109 homes, Atkinson Elementary, Krainzwood Park and the Sojourner Truth housing complex. Initial results show 71 of the 109 homes and two spots at Sojourner Truth had lead levels higher than 400 parts per million, the EPA safety guideline for places where children play.

When the soil removal will begin and who will pay for it -- the companies that used the smelter or the EPA -- are being worked out, said Jason El-Zein, chief of the EPA's emergency-response branch on Grosse Ile. "Either way, it will get cleaned," El-Zein said Wednesday. The soil testing was ordered after a Free Press investigation published in January criticized the EPA for never finishing a 1998 cleanup of the former lead smelter. At that time, the EPA also took just seven soil samples from the neighborhood and decided no cleanup around homes was needed. At lead smelters elsewhere in the country, hundreds, even thousands, of soil samples are routinely taken in neighborhoods.

Since that report, the EPA ordered the 11 companies that used the smelter, at 4700 E. Nevada, to finish the work begun in 1998. That is under way.

The EPA also started to test the neighborhood.

Initially, the EPA took 70 soil samples from areas within 2 miles of the smelter. Five came back with elevated lead levels.

The latest batch of results, part of the second testing phase, sampled soil from homes within a quarter-mile northeast of the site, the predominant wind direction. Most of the 71 had lead levels in the 500 ppm range, but some were higher -- up to 2,100 ppm, said James Justice, the EPA's on-scene coordinator.

EPA officials are still fine-tuning their results and plan to mail them to home owners within the next two weeks.

Barbara Lackey, president of the Krainzwood Neighborhood Organization, said she has many questions for the EPA ? starting with why more homes weren't tested during the second phase. Lackey said she lives three

blocks north of the smelter, and no one asked for permission to test her yard.

"I'm planting vegetables. I'm planting fruit. If this soil is contaminated, then I'm eating it," said Lackey, 62.

Lead poisoning has been linked to a number of health and social problems, ranging from osteoporosis to learning disabilities and even juvenile delinquency.

High lead in the soil is particularly worrisome for children who are more likely to get dirt on their hands and into their mouths.

Many older urban areas, like Detroit's, have high levels of lead in the soil from years of leaded gas use and industrialization. Some students at the Catherine Ferguson Academy on Detroit's near west side recently tested the soil within four blocks of their school and found many homes with elevated lead soil levels.

Their school is less than a mile from a former smelter, called City Metals Refining. There are no plans to further investigate that site.

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EPA to clean lead from yards

BY TINA LAM

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

June 27, 2003

A cleanup of lead-contaminated yards in the shadow of the former Master Metals Smelter in Detroit should begin this summer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials said Thursday.

About 75 people fanned themselves in the muggy heat as they listened to experts explaining the testing and cleanup.

RELATED CONTENT

[Lead is a worry across country](#)

Eleven companies that either owned or used the smelter have been asked to pay for the cleanup. If they refuse, the EPA Superfund is to pay for the work and sue for reimbursement.

Trees, fences, sprinkler systems and landscaping that must be dug up will be replaced.

Soil in contaminated yards will be dug down as deep as 1 foot and replaced with new, clean soil.

Some of the 71 home owners with contaminated yards have mixed feelings about the cleanup.

"I've put in 46 years of labor at my house," said Clarence McQueen. "It hurts to even think about tearing it up."

Cheryl Taylor has high levels of lead in her entire yard and a 6-year-old son who may be affected. "At school, they tell me he's very hyper," she said. "I now know where that may be coming from." He has never been tested for lead poisoning, but will be.

Adults at Thursday's meeting expressed concerns about their health and anger that they won't be tested. Sarah Tolbert went to school a few blocks from the smelter. "I believe everyone here was contaminated," she said.

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Mick Hans

08/26/2003 09:22 AM

To: Thomas Skinner, William Muno, RICHARD KARL, Jason El-Zein, Elissa S
Subject: Detroit Free Press 8-26-03: Master Metals coverage

CLEANUP ORDER: Poisoned soil by old smelter to be replaced

BY TINA LAM
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 26, 2003

Four years ago, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declared there was no lead contamination in the neighborhood near an abandoned lead smelter in northeast Detroit.

Now, the agency is forcing a group of companies, including automakers General Motors Corp., Ford Motor Co. and DaimlerChrysler, to pay an estimated \$3.7 million to clean up lead-laced soil in nearby yards and at the smelter.

The six firms will pay to dig up and replace contaminated soil in the yards of 69 homes and two areas of a public housing project within a quarter-mile of the former Master Metals smelter on Nevada, east of Ryan Road. If they had not agreed to pay, the nearly broke EPA Superfund would have had to cover the costs.

"I'm glad they're cleaning it up," said Kelly King, who lives in the Sojourner Truth housing project across the street from the old smelter. King's son Malik, 12, was diagnosed with lead poisoning at age 3. "I don't want this to happen to anyone else's child," King added.

The agreement comes after a Free Press report detailed how an earlier cleanup of the contaminated site had stalled. Despite an order by the EPA to finish, the companies had done nothing, the newspaper reported in January. Children were playing in an abandoned building on the property.

After the report was published, the EPA ordered more testing of the neighborhood and demanded that the companies that once owned the smelter or sent batteries there finish the cleanup or pay triple its cost.

In 1999, the EPA determined, based on just seven soil samples, that lead had not blown from the plant into nearby yards. The plant had recycled batteries at 4700 E. Nevada for nearly three decades until the mid-1980s.

The Free Press hired a soil expert who took 97 samples and found levels as high as 5,811 parts per million within 1.8 miles of the plant. Residents and former smelter workers told the newspaper they remembered clouds of black dust hanging over the Sojourner Truth complex and nearby homes and settling on sidewalks and clotheslines. Even EPA scientists said there was little doubt some lead would have blown from the plant into the neighborhood.

A high danger risk

Recent tests by the EPA have shown that two-thirds of the yards closest to the smelter are contaminated. Some had lead levels as high as 2,100 parts per million, more than five times the level considered a risk to children.

The cleanup costs could be higher than the \$3.7 million estimate, because 50 homes northeast of the smelter have yet to be tested. If high lead levels are found, those yards also will have to be dug up and filled with clean soil.

The EPA took 600 soil samples this spring. However, at public meetings in recent months, many neighbors complained that their yards had not been tested. The EPA did intensive sampling only northeast of the plant because that's the way the wind blows much of the time. Some neighbors said the agency should test homes near the plant in other directions.

Residents also are unhappy that they won't be compensated for health problems associated with lead contamination. *Some have said they may sue.*

By the time they're finished, the companies involved will have paid about \$5 million to clean the Master Metals site and surrounding neighborhood, the EPA estimates.

Costly cleanup

The cleanup of the smelter property started in 1998 and finished in 1999, costing about \$1.3 million, a lawyer for the EPA said. The current cleanup of the smelter site, which began this spring and could be finished by November, is costing \$1.2 million. The cleanup of residential yards will cost about \$2.5 million. The cost estimates include reimbursing the EPA for its costs for testing and *overseeing the work.*

In addition to the three automakers, the companies paying for the work are NL Industries Inc., a former smelter owner; *Allied Signal, now owned by Honeywell Corp. and also a former smelter owner,* and Johnson Controls Inc. The automakers and Johnson Controls all sent batteries to the smelter for recycling.

"It's just part of the cost of doing business as a longtime industrial company," said Kathy Graham, spokeswoman for the Chrysler Group. "Sometimes in the past, people didn't realize what would happen years later. Now we're trying to make it right."

The other companies declined comment, other than confirming the agreement. The other four companies that did business with the smelter did not sign the agreement with the EPA.

"We may have further negotiations with the others," said Jan Carlson, an attorney for the federal agency in Chicago.

James Justice, coordinator of the Master Metals project for the EPA, said the cleanup will start in late September and the companies will have five months to finish. The EPA will oversee it, including testing when the work is finished. Yards will be dug up and trees, grass, shrubs, fences and other plants replaced.

To read the Free Press' investigation of lead poisoning, see:

Contact TINA LAM at 313-223-4407 or lam@freepress.com.

Carefully doing the dirty work

September 22, 2003

A year ago, the abandoned brick headquarters of the former Master Metals lead smelter was covered with graffiti and sometimes used by Detroit children as a clubhouse. A cleanup the Environmental Protection Agency began in 1999 had stalled and lead levels on the site were dangerously high. Two weeks after the Free Press uncovered the failed cleanup, the EPA ordered 11 companies who were responsible for the toxic lead dust to finish the cleanup or pay triple its cost. The cleanup is now nearly finished, and the smelter headquarters on East Nevada in northeast Detroit is at last being reduced to rubble. -- *By Tina Lam*

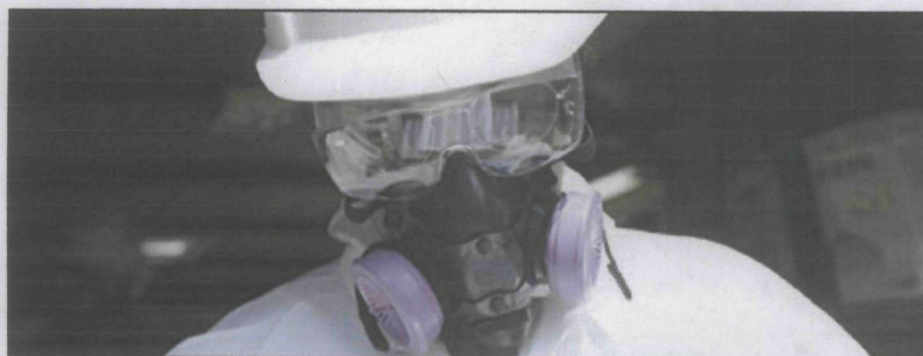
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Photos by CHIP SOMODEVILLA/DFP

STANDING ALONE: A crew from Adamo Demolition Co. of Detroit prepares to destroy the last structure at the Master Metals lead smelter earlier this month. The company was contracted by the state to tear down the building as part of a cleanup of the site, which tests have shown was heavily contaminated with lead.



DRESSING FOR

SUCCESS: Workers must protect themselves from the potentially harmful effects of lead. An employee of ENTACT, a national firm that specializes in the cleanup of lead-contaminated sites, puts on a gas mask, helmet, eye protection, boots, full-body suit and latex gloves before taking readings of the soil at the site.



KEEPING IT DOWN: An

Adamo worker sprays water during demolition of the last structure on the former Master Metals site. The water is meant to keep airborne dust down. The site is across the street from the Sojourner Truth Housing Complex. A cleanup was started on the site in 1999, but not completed.



DIGGING IT OUT: The soil

in this area was identified as a hot spot, or an area of the former smelting site with a high concentration of lead. An ENTACT worker surveys the 6-foot-deep trench where soil was removed. State and federal authorities have been working since May to remove contaminated soil.

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